Richard Griffiths

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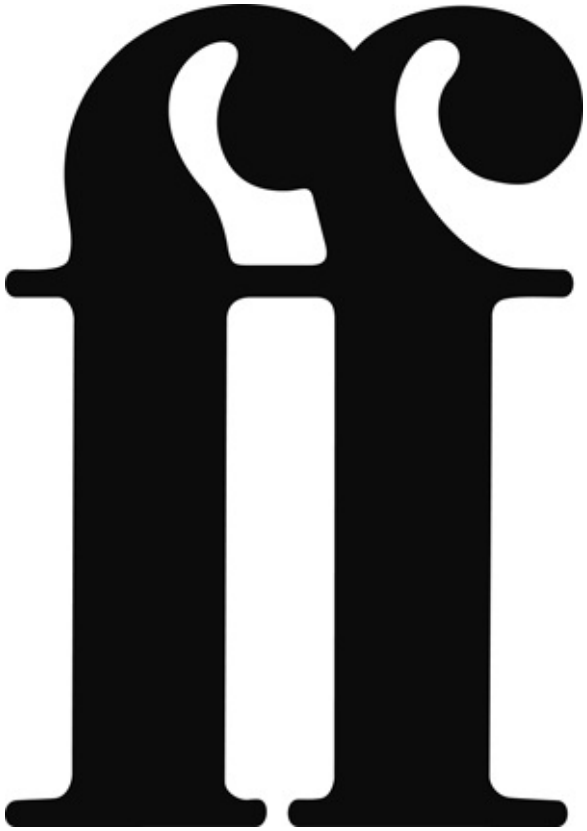

FELLOW TRAVELLERS OF THE RIGHT

British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany 1933–1939

RICHARD GRIFFITHS

For PATRICIA

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Preface

'SOME EFFORT is required in the 1960s', wrote K. W. Watkins in 1963, 'to grasp the extent of the hold which anti-French and pro-German feelings had on sections of the British Right in the 1930s.'[1] The strength of pro-Nazi Germany views, he noted, 'was such that not in Hitler's Germany but in England Churchill could be described as "unquestionably the biggest war-monger in the world today"'.[2]

This book is an attempt to study the various forms of motivation which led to this phenomenon. It is also an attempt to assess the years in which approval for Nazi Germany became greater or less, and the possible reasons for these changes.

A great deal of work has, of course, been done on 'appeasement'. This, though it is a related subject, is not, however, the theme of this book. The appeasers, in the late thirties, were people who, because of the specific political situation, and for varying reasons,[3] were convinced that it was essential to seek an accommodation with Germany; they were not necessarily friendly towards Germany herself in abstract, or in favour of the Nazi régime.

I have used the word 'enthusiasts' in order to differentiate those people who will be our main area of study. There were varying degrees of enthusiasm, as we shall see, and it was not always at white heat. What was the common factor to them all was a propensity to positive statements of approval of Germany. In some, this was extended to detailed approval of the Nazi internal régime; in others, certain aspects of that régime had to be excused, or ignored, in favour of those aspects which had attracted approval.

Naturally, alongside these people we shall also have to consider the whole spectrum of other favourable attitudes to Germany, including those of 'appeasement' itself, in order to gain a more complete picture of the background against which our 'enthusiasts' were acting; though so much has already been written on this area that it has not been necessary to deal with it in such detail as the central theme.

It must above all be stressed that this study, by its nature, is concerned with just one aspect of the many-sided political life of the thirties. That one aspect holds the centre of the stage, to the extent that, unless read with care, the book may seem to present a one-sided view. Its central themes must be considered in relation to the political life of the period as a whole, for a balanced picture to emerge. Above all, it must be stressed that we are dealing with public opinion, rather than with the areas of decision-making in government.[4]

The people with whom this book deals were, in most circumstances, a sizeable minority of public opinion rather than anything more. At times they were substantial enough to have some effect upon public policy, however; and even if there had not been this contemporary political importance, an assessment of their motivation is of general interest, in that it throws considerable light on the nature of certain kinds of political behaviour.

They were apologists. They are interesting because they were sufficiently convinced of the Tightness of their views to make them public, either by voicing them in print, or by joining groups which did so. It is in various printed forms that one finds their conscious explanation of the reasons for which they held their views, and the attempt to persuade others to join them. Some wrote books; many wrote articles in dailies, weeklies and monthlies; others wrote letters to the newspapers. By the nature of the subject, most of the primary material has therefore been culled

from public print; though occasional, limited use has been made of memoirs and letters.

There is one major problem in such a study. By the nature of things, it is the more prominent and more educated members of society who have the opportunity to express themselves, and to have their words remembered. The case-histories are therefore, more often than not, taken from the élites. It has been possible, nevertheless, to gain some impression of the extent to which their opinions were followed by other members of society. There is, for example, the local Press in the provinces; there is also the information we possess as to the membership, in certain areas, of groups devoted to Anglo-German friendship; there are the memoirs of those who came into contact with ordinary people. One can add to these the uncertain information provided by the predecessors of our modern opinion polls. Such information is, of course, incomplete, but it is better than nothing, and a fairly coherent picture emerges of the background, at various stages, against which the apologists were working.

Among the prominent apologists, it has usually been possible to choose specific examples to illustrate in detail the various trends involved. To have gone into the same amount of detail for a larger number of protagonists would have lengthened the book immeasurably, without adding very much to our knowledge. It has nevertheless been impossible, if such a study is to be complete, to avoid all reference to people who are still alive. Certain figures are essential to the depiction of a trend, or of a complex series of motives.

The appraisal of people's reasons for holding opinions which, at first sight, appear unfortunate, is a fascinating task. Nobody holds opinions which they feel to be wrong; one must therefore attempt to see things through these people's eyes, to assess what they felt to be right, and why. It is important to realise that, for a number of the proponents of Nazi Germany, these motives were of the highest. Some prominent figures emerge from this study as men of high principle and integrity, who were led into admiration for Germany not by any other factors, but by all that was best in them – a concern for the condition of the working man, a belief in a spiritual lead, or a propensity to see the best in everyone and everything. Others, of course, had motives for their beliefs which were more in tune with the basic nature of Nazism. It is this very variety of motivation that is of interest – and which creates the difficulty of making too many generalisations about the matter.

Pro-Germanism, and pro-Nazism, could be carried to extremes; some of the British extremist groups which pursued anti-Semitic policies, for example, were among the most violent supporters of the Nazi régime. In one sense, however, they were atypical of public responses in general. Though they are a necessary part of our study, they are merely one aspect of British pro-Nazism. Strangely enough, whenever the subject of this book has been mentioned in conversation, the immediate response has been: 'Mosley'. Yet, as will be seen, Mosley, and his followers, and other Fascist movements do not play a central role until the very latest stages, when all except extreme support for Nazi Germany had been withdrawn. The extremist movements, for most of the period, existed alongside other enthusiasts, who were often more concerned to explain or to ignore certain Nazi internal policies than to praise them, and whose praise was reserved for other aspects of the régime.

The pattern of British pro-Nazism is at first sight surprising. After a slow start in the 1933–5 period, it reached a high peak in the years 1936 and 1937, after which it gradually declined until, at the outbreak of war, it was confined to extremist groups and isolated outcrops of specially motivated approval.

In order to depict this pattern, the sections of the book have been organised in the following manner. The period from 1933 to 1935 has been treated as a whole, with the various areas of support for Nazi Germany being examined alongside each other, together with allied opinions which might have been presumed to lead to pro-Nazism, but often did not. Questions of motivation are seen to be extremely diverse, and individual cases have to be examined at length.

Then, from 1936 onwards, the subject is considered chronologically, under the impetus of events. 1936 is seen to be the time when many people, this time more coherently recognisable as social and political groups, came over to support for Nazi Germany; 1937 is seen as a year in which, with slight variations, this position was maintained. In Section Three, we have the decline from 1938 onwards, when support was gradually withdrawn. The various reasons for this withdrawal, and the timing of it in individual cases, are possibly even more significant than the reasons for the initial support.

Though the central theme of this book has been relatively unexplored until this time, there are a considerable number of works to which I have been indebted for information upon areas of knowledge related to it, or upon specific areas within it. As well as being mentioned in the Bibliography, most of these are mentioned in footnotes at the points where they have been of particular use. I would like, however, to name here a few that have been of the greatest value to me: Maurice Cowling's *The Impact of Hitler*, Frances Donaldson's *Edward VIII*, Franklin R. Gannon's *The British Press and Germany, 1936–9*, Martin Gilbert's *The Roots of Appeasement*, Martin Gilbert's and Richard Gott's *The Appeasers*, Robert Skidelsky's *Oswald Mosley*, and D. C. Watt's *Personalities and Policies*.

I am also grateful to those who have helped me, either by putting me on the track of information, or by giving me excellent advice. I would particularly like to thank Mr George Attewell, the late Professor Robert Auty, Mr Vernon Bogdanor, Mr Maurice Cowling, Colonel Alan Dower, Monsignor Alfred Gilbey, Dr Ursula Henriques, the late Professor Sir Otto Kahn-Freund, Mr Ernle Money, Professor Alfred Moritz, the Revd Dr Edward Norman, the Lord Paget, and the late Sir Charles Petrie.

I should like to thank the following publishers for permission to quote from their books: the Oxford University Press for Thomas Jones's *A Diary with Letters, 1931–50*, and for Sir Arnold Wilson's *Walks and Talks Abroad*; Macmillan London Ltd. for *The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart 1915–1938*; William Collins Sons and Co Ltd for Harold Nicolson's *Diaries and Letters 1930–39*; George Harrap and Co. Ltd. for George Ward Price's *I Know these Dictators*; and Hutchinson Publishing Group Ltd. for Admiral Sir Barry Domvile's *By and Large*. Thanks are also due to all the publishers and authors from whose works I have quoted to lesser extent.

1 K. W. Watkins, *Britain Divided: The Effect of the Spanish Civil War on British Political Opinion*, London, 1963, p. 105.

2 Ibid., p. 89.

3 See Martin Gilbert, *The Roots of Appeasement*, London, 1966, *passim*.

4 An excellent study of Governmental attitudes in the same period can be found in Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler*.

Part 1

1933–5 The Beginnings

Introduction

ONE of the important things to remember about the period from 1933 to 1935 is that Germany was not necessarily at the forefront of everyone's mind. Since 1919, it is true, there had been an area of opinion which felt sympathy for Germany as a result of the harshness of the Versailles Treaty, but this was a continuing rather than a dramatic involvement. The advent of the Nazis to power caused a certain superficial concern: reports of the public manifestations of Nazi internal policies – the Jewish boycott, the brutalities of the SA and the SS, the Roehm purge, *etc.* – brought the new régime into considerable disrepute with British public opinion, as many observers[1] were to note. There was, however, little lasting urgency to such views, for there was little grasp of the potential importance of Nazi Germany (just as there had been little realisation, before 1933, that the Nazi Party was anything other than one more European extremist party).[2] The new Germany was seen as an alien, and often as an unpleasant, society which had little import for Great Britain. Even the realisation, by the time of the Nuremberg Laws of September 1935, that Nazi anti-Semitism was no flash in the pan, did not disturb the calm of the British public; they might express strong distaste, but Germany was, after all, a foreign country. As for the possibility of danger from the new Germany, it was left to the French to continue with the same fears which had caused their intransigence in 1919; now, as then, the British believed the French to be exaggerating the dangers. Early refugees from Germany have recorded their impressions of the basic equanimity of the British public in relation to the German problem, an equanimity which both baffled and exasperated them.[3] This unconcern, coupled with a genuine desire for peace, and a certain sympathy with the German position, led to attitudes which Martin Gilbert has described as an early desire for 'appeasement'; a desire which found some satisfaction in the Anglo-German Naval Treaty of 21 June 1935.[4] An examination of the newspaper headlines in the period will show that German matters were on the whole overshadowed by other international events, except at exceptional moments; and the letter-columns show how little, at this stage, the German régime was at the forefront of the minds of the letter-writers – a strong contrast to the years from 1936 onwards.

It will be important, throughout this study, to highlight the uncertainty of generalisations. This is particularly true of this first section, covering the period 1933–5. Firstly, we will be examining those areas of opinion which might have been presumed to welcome the new dictatorship, because of its accordance with previous views held by the people concerned; the picture will be seen to be by no means so simple. Secondly, some of the groups and individuals that *were* attracted to Germany at this stage will come under scrutiny, and be found to provide similar uncertainties.

The first group to be looked at (which is in reality a series of groups) consists of the enthusiasts for dictatorship, and for Mussolini's Italy. They were no exception to the general contemporary tendency to underestimate Nazism's importance. To many of them, it was merely one more example of the new guiding principle. Some were prepared to praise it, alongside their own favourite dictatorship. Others, worried by the effect of Nazi atrocities upon that section of the British public that might otherwise have been attracted to Fascism, attempted to dissociate their own efforts from it. Others genuinely saw it as a pagan example of German 'nastiness', and as a complete contrast to the noble ideals of Italian Fascism. It is possible to see certain governing characteristics of motivation in relation to the appeal of Italian Fascism, but far less possible to

define a correlation between this and pro-Nazism.

Anti-Semitism might appear to be more simple. This, surely, was a characteristic of one section of opinion that would welcome one of the central policies of Nazism, and would not be put off by humanitarian concerns. Though there was more unanimity in this area than among the Fascists, the reality was nevertheless complex; for anti-Semites who were also anti-German there was a great problem of choice, and a newspaper such as *The Patriot* remained strongly anti-German until 1936. Anti-Semitism of a political and active kind was, moreover, a minority interest in Great Britain (as opposed to the widespread parlour anti-Semitism, and verbal anti-Semitism), so that this class of support is, in reality, a false trail if one is looking for a strong grouping.

The new influx of Jewish refugees did, however, provide a section of the country which was receptive to anti-Semitic propaganda: the working class in those areas where the influx caused economic and social hardship. The major political parties avoided such policies, not only because of a distaste for them, but also through a realisation that such a distaste would be felt by a majority of the electorate, and that an appeal to the working class of a particular area would be bound to boomerang against them nationally. Certain extremist groups, however, turned to anti-Semitism as a new hope of achieving increased membership and power in the areas most likely to provide them with support. These anti-Semitic policies became closely connected with admiration for Nazi Germany.

Outside these extreme groups it is difficult to point to coherent areas of strong support in the 1933–5 period. The Nazi propagandists knew certain categories which it was advantageous to sound out: ex-servicemen felt the appeal of comradeship, Air Force men, particularly, a fellow-feeling with their counterparts in Germany. In both these groups there were also people who felt a positive admiration for the achievements of the Nazi régime; but there was a wide spectrum of opinion. The same is true of other groups.

Many individuals, of course, felt admiration for the new régime. But it is when we look at the case-histories of a cross-section of such individuals that we see the enormous variety of motives, and the varying degrees of warmth, that were involved. It is possible, however, to say that on the whole such individuals appear to have been a minority within the social groups to which they belonged.

So the 1933–5 period presents an unsatisfactory picture for anyone who wants a coherent view of attitudes to Germany. That country was not sufficiently in the forefront of most people's minds to make this possible. The desire for 'appeasement' which Gilbert notes in these early years has more to do with general principles on the subject of peace, or with a generalised feeling of sympathy, than with actual opinions on the nature of the Nazi régime. It was the year 1936 which was to bring Germany to people's attention in a way that had never happened before, and to polarise opinions to the extent that we will be able to detect a coherent pro-German front outside the extremist organisations.

1 In Summer 1933, for example, Baron von Neurath, the German Foreign Minister, reported, while on a visit to London, 'that Anglo-German relations had hit an all-time low'. (Watt, *Personalities and Policies*, p. 122.)

2 This is, I feel, the basic explanation for the phenomena reported in Brigitte Granzow's *A Mirror of Nazism.*

3 *E.g.* Professor Otto Kahn-Freund, in conversation with the author. See also A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War,* London, 1961, Chapter 4, for British reactions to German rearmament claims, *etc.*

4 Martin Gilbert, *The Roots of Appeasement*, p. 149.

[1]

Weariness of Democracy, and Admiration for Dictators

THROUGHOUT the inter-war period, as the shortcomings of the democratic system became more and more apparent, spokesmen for a more authoritarian form of government were not wanting. With the economic crisis from 1929 onwards, these trends became increasingly clear. In all this, the figure of Mussolini was of great importance, and in the late twenties the example of Italy appeared to stand out above all others; indeed, we shall see Italy continuing to hold that pre-eminent position even after the rise of Nazism.

The Italian Connexion, 1923–33

'The accolades which had been so enthusiastically and gratuitously cast upon him by conservative writers and public figures in the nineteen-twenties and early thirties had been so frequent and so unequivocally phrased that he had no trouble in believing that he was indeed the greatest statesman of his time.'[1] So writes Christopher Hibbert of Mussolini. And there is no doubt that, in a decade when statesmanship, after the rejection of Lloyd George and Clemenceau, had seemed almost non-existent, Mussolini appeared to stand out head and shoulders above those around him. Italy presented, to many, the picture of a country that had turned from chaos to order, from widespread poverty to comparative affluence. There was also the rhetoric of Fascism, which made Italy once more seem a great nation, worthy to be consulted on all international issues. To the inhabitants of countries which appeared to be losing their pride and their imperial past, this regeneration of 'Italian self-respect' seemed one of the most important features of the régime.

For the most part, however, it must be realised that this praise of Fascism, in Great Britain, was delivered by people who saw it as an essentially Italian phenomenon. It did not, for them, have any real relevance to the British situation. *The Times* was typical in its tone of objective, yet approving, observation.

A. J. P. Taylor stresses some of the contradictions he finds in British politicians of this period. Among them he lists a certain ambivalence in relation to democracy and dictatorship:

> Every politician extolled the virtues of democracy, especially at the expense of Soviet Russia. Despite this rhetoric, MacDonald wrote friendly personal letters to the Fascist dictator Mussolini; Austen Chamberlain exchanged photographs with him and joined him in family holidays; Churchill sang his praises … in newspaper articles.[2]

Yet this ambivalence, if it existed, rested very much on the kind of opinion that we have already stressed – that Fascism was for the Italians. There was a tone of condescension in much of it. Italy was a lesser power, and its aspirations were worthy, but relatively unimportant. For Austen Chamberlain Mussolini was a wonderful man because he was 'working for the greatness of his country',[3] but there was also 'no greater mistake than to apply British standards to un-British conditions. Mussolini would not be a Fascist if he were an Englishman in England'.[4] Winston

Churchill's much-quoted praise of Fascism is similarly moderate, when the speech is seen in full (as opposed to isolated sentences), and when his position as a distinguished visitor to Italy is taken into account. After the famous sentence 'If I had been an Italian, I am sure that I should have been wholeheartedly with you from start to finish in your triumphant struggle against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism', he went on to say, 'But in England we have not had to fight this danger in the same deadly form. We have our way of doing things'.[5] Many other people, while benevolent to Fascism, felt as T. S. Eliot did – that it was 'an Italian régime for Italians, a product of the Italian mind'.[6]

It is hindsight which makes this general benevolence towards Fascism of any great importance in itself, as the Italian régime must have seemed, at first, as relevant to the affairs of this country as the régime of the Greek colonels did in the early nineteen-seventies. It was admired, but from a distance; and it hit the headlines, the leader pages and the letter columns only when specific events forced themselves on the attention of the world. The occupation of Corfu and the murder of Matteotti were two such events, in the early years of Fascism; but once the ripples of these had died down, Fascism became almost taken for granted, as a highly successful political experiment, and a permanent part of the European scene.

This, then, was the background against which certain other British people took a far more positive pro-Fascist and pro-Mussolini line. Many of them admired Fascism not just as an Italian phenomenon, but as a lesson for the world, and, indeed, for Great Britain. There were extremist groups in this country which modelled themselves upon Italian Fascism, often because of a strong belief in the Bolshevik threat;[7] they, of course, were fairly unrepresentative. But there was also a body of conservative opinion which took a serious interest in Fascism, both for its qualities of leadership and for its corporatist theories. This is particularly true from 1927 onwards when the Fascist state had fully established itself.

In the late twenties and early thirties the British public's knowledge of Italian Fascism was in large part gleaned through the enthusiastic writings of a number of figures who had in common a long-standing relationship with Italy, a high-minded approach to political and social questions, and a certain romanticism of outlook. Prominent among these were Major James S. Barnes, Harold E. Goad, and Francis Yeats-Brown, together with Miss Muriel Currey, a close collaborator of Goad's.

Barnes, Goad, and Yeats-Brown could all be termed High Tories. Combined with a nostalgia for a more perfect past, they had a concern for the well-being, in the present, of those whom they saw as the victims of the capitalist system. Two of them, Barnes and Goad, saw all this very much in religious terms. For all three, Mussolini's Fascism was a movement which had been aware of these problems, and had gone a long way towards solving them. It seemed to be a way out of an *impasse.*

James Strachey Barnes, born in 1892, and brought up in Italy, had become a Roman Catholic in 1914. In the Great War he served in France and Italy, and then attended the Peace Conference as a supernumerary expert on Italian questions. He then went to live in Italy; he was later to claim that the *Leitmotif* of his life had been his love for that country, for two reasons: 'my faith in standards of universal value and my worship of the Holy Spirit, Lord and Giver of Life. Italy represents these things as does no other country'.[8] Barnes lived in Rome 'during those first stirring revolutionary years of Fascism'.[9] In the years 1925–6, he lived 'as a sort of gentleman-commoner' at the English College, the Beda.[10]

He became a member of the Italian Fascist Party and 'a friend of the most constructive statesman of this age, Benito Mussolini'.[11] In 1926 he wrote a thesis on *The Universal Aspects of Fascism,* which was published in London in 1928. In 1927 he went to Switzerland to become Secretary-General of CINEF (the *Centre International des Études Fascistes*), an international body,

centred in Lausanne, whose aim was ostensibly the objective study of Fascism (though Barnes's correspondence with at least one member shows that it was basically a propaganda organisation).[12] Other British members of the Committee included Professor Edmund Gardner, Professor Walter Starkie and Lord Sydenham of Combe. Barnes remained Secretary-General for the two years in which CINEF flourished.

His second book on the Italian experiment, a slim volume for the Home University Library entitled *Fascism,* was published in 1931. During this period he also wrote innumerable articles on the subject, in British and foreign journals. The popularity of his writings is shown by the fact that a second edition of *The Universal Aspects of Fascism* was published in 1929, and a second edition of *Fascism* in 1934.

Harold Elsdale Goad was a gentle, intellectual man whose whole life was centred around a devout Anglican belief. He was born in 1878. After University, he travelled extensively in Italy and the Balkans, staying a great deal at his mother's Italian home. It was at this stage that he became very concerned with social conditions, and in 1902 started an orphanage in Assisi, run by nuns for illegitimate children who would otherwise have ended up on the streets. He had a strong devotion to St Francis of Assisi, and was later to write a book on *Franciscan Italy* (1926). He also wrote mystical poetry of some merit, most of it very devotional in style. A religious novel, *The Kingdom,* appeared in 1913.[13] In 1922 he was appointed director of the British Institute in Florence, where he was to remain until 1939. Under his influence, Florence became a centre of British enthusiasm for Fascism. *The Italian Mail,* published in that city, was a vehicle for such opinions.

In the late twenties and early thirties Goad produced a series of works intended to explain Fascism to the English. *What is Fascism?,* produced in 1929, went through four editions between then and 1932. *The Making of the Corporate State,* published in 1932, came out in a revised edition in 1934. As a result of a number of papers read by English and Italian experts to a group formed in London in 1933 for the study of corporatism (under the chairmanship of Sir Charles Petrie), Goad and Miss Muriel Currey produced a joint work called *The Working of a Corporate State* (1933). Like Barnes, Goad wrote many articles on Fascism for British and foreign journals. His output continued right up to the outbreak of war.

It is impossible, in this period, to speak of Harold Goad without also mentioning Miss Muriel Currey. She was a great friend of Goad's, and frequently in his company; at his death, in 1956, she was his literary executor. Her own major work was *Italian Foreign Policy, 1918–1932,* published in 1932. She often seems to have been a spokesman for Goad's ideas at public meetings,[14] particularly in the early thirties.

Francis Yeats-Brown was a colourful figure. Born in 1886, the son and grandson of British consuls at Genoa, he was to achieve distinction in the Indian Army, where he remained until 1924. Thereafter his career was mainly in the field of journalism; from 1926 to 1931 he was assistant editor of *The Spectator.* Like Goad, Yeats-Brown had a great paternalistic concern for the fate of the working classes. He was attracted to Italian Fascism because of his violent reaction to slums and unemployment, and also because of his fear of Bolshevism and his suspicions of parliamentary democracy. As his biographer has put it:

> The Parliamentary machine under Mr. Baldwin, and even under Ramsay MacDonald, did not seem capable of mending matters. Just back from witnessing Signor Mussolini pulling down derelict areas in Rome, draining the Pontine marshes, and establishing new and healthy colonies in the Campagna, he undoubtedly compared the achievements in Italy with the half-hearted methods at home … The new Europe already in being, in Italy and elsewhere, now

became his chief preoccupation.[15]

In the early thirties Yeats-Brown achieved fame with two books about his army experiences, *Bengal Lancer* (1930), and *Golden Horn* (1932), the latter of which described his narrowing experiences when imprisoned by the Turks in the First World War. On the basis of this, he became a much more freelance writer, leaving the *Spectator,* though for a short time in late 1933 he tried a particularly interesting journalistic experiment with the weekly *Everyman.*

These three very different men stood for very typical strands of British thought which attracted people to Fascism. Barnes was in the tradition of English Catholicism based on the views of Belloc and Chesterton. Like them, he wanted a fairer distribution of wealth, social peace, and the downfall of the international financier. Fascism, for him, meant a return to the Catholic Middle Ages, and was an attack on 'the ideas to which the Renaissance gave birth and which have dominated the world for several centuries'.[16] It stood for a 'sense of moral purpose' rather than any specific political tendency, whether of Left or Right. Italy had been in a terrible state, but Mussolini's moral power had made the whole Italian people full of moral strength. Britain, which was in a similar state, required a similar solution.

Where Barnes was concerned more with personalities than with policies, Goad, Currey and Yeats-Brown had a strong interest in corporatist principles. Goad, like Barnes, saw Fascism as a return to primitive virtues, a reaction against the materialism that had destroyed human life in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A 'moral and spiritual change' had come over the Italian people; the emphasis was now not on 'the rights of Man' but on 'his duty'.[17]

All of them were opposed to democracy. 'The hope of order in Europe depends on the abolition of democracy and the establishment of Corporate States',[18] wrote Yeats-Brown. 'It is a practical way of adjusting the interests of capital and labour so that both may benefit.'[19] For Goad, dictatorship was liberty, democracy was tyranny. The corporate state kept 'a just balance between syndicate and corporation, so as to restrict the exploitation of any group or class by any other'.[20] Under it the working classes were looked after as never before. Similarly, Barnes believed that Fascism solved the extreme inequality in the distribution of wealth that was produced by the democratic society.[21]

Alongside these main publicists, there were many other enthusiasts for Italy. Naturally, it is the most literate of them that have left behind them the evidence of their beliefs, but behind them there was a considerable section of the community. Italian scholars headed the field: Professor Edmund Gardner of London University, and Professor Walter Starkie of the National University in Dublin were both foundation members of the CINEF in 1927; for Gardner the 'accelerated rhythm of Italian life' which had been produced by 'the great leader of contemporary Italy, Benito Mussolini', had given a new importance to Italian studies, because Italy had become 'an increasingly predominant factor in the life and thought of the world to-day'.[22] Starkie, after an interview with Mussolini in 1927, was convinced that he was 'a phenomenon of nature … cast up out of the soil of Italy as a reminder of the eternal, primitive virtues of the Italic race'.[23] For Starkie, who was obsessed with Irish problems, Fascism was a possible solution. Ireland was ripe for a 'spiritual awakening', and might 'come to assimilate a great deal of Fascist political doctrine, properly understood'; as a result, it could avoid 'that selfish individualism and agnosticism which have formed the basis of political theory in modern times'.[24] Like many Catholics, Starkie was enthusiastic about Mussolini's signing of the Lateran Treaty, which appeared to have solved the Roman question. Mussolini had 'manifested on many occasions the deep reverence of his Government towards religion', and 'ever since 1929 there has been a definite expansion of religious feeling in the country'.[25]

Among writers who were enthusiastic about the Italian experiment must be placed George Bernard Shaw. Some writers have stressed the idiosyncratic nature of his opinions in the inter-war period; but on the Italian question, despite the deliberate extravagance of some of his detailed comments (such as the suggestion that 'The murder of Matteotti is no more an argument against Fascism than the murder of St Thomas à Becket is an argument against feudalism'),[26] they are typical of certain sections of British thought. Mussolini had gone 'further in the direction of Socialism than the English Labour Party could yet venture if they were in power'.[27] Socialism was bound to breed tyranny of a kind, and when he went to Italy, all the tyranny Shaw saw 'was of the kind which our Capitalist press denounces as characteristic of Socialism; and I do not boil with indignation at it as the Liberals do'.[28] Shaw's main theme was the inadequacy of democracy. Dictatorship, he claimed, was more efficient and more of the people. 'Italy is governed by a man of the people, whilst France, libertarian, egalitarian and fraternian, is governed by Monsieur Poincaré.'[29]Above all, the *reality of power* was important, and as 'the democratic idealism of the XIXth century is as dead as a doornail', socialists should be 'delighted to find at last a Socialist who speaks and thinks as responsible rulers do'.[30]

Enthusiasm for Italian Fascism was expressed in all manner of places. Books on ancient history, for example; George P. Baker's *Sulla the Fortunate; the Great Dictator* (1927), *Hannibal* (1929), *Tiberius Caesar* (1929), etc., all contained references to the contemporary relevance of dictatorship. Mussolini, at the time of the Abyssinian war, was 'the great surgeon' whose knife would cut the cancer of slavery out of Abyssinia,[31] wrote Baker.

The military appear to have been particularly affected by this enthusiasm. People like Colonel Henry Fortescue, Lt.-Col. Cyril Rocke, and Lt.-Col. R. D. Beith assailed the newspapers with their views, and were to become particularly vociferous at the time of the Abyssinian crisis; Lt.-Gen. Sir George MacMunn expressed great admiration for Mussolini; and, as we shall see, retired military men were to be the backbone of the early Fascist movements based on the example of Mussolini. The most prominent military man to praise Italy in print may, however, have been swayed by financial, rather than by purely idealistic motives. This was Major Edward Poison Newman, who published articles in many journals, and was an inveterate propagandist for the Italian régime. For this he was well paid; from 1932 onwards, when he was sent to the Italian colonies at the expense of the Italian government, he was kept on a retainer by the Italian Embassy, and by September 1936 had produced two books and about one hundred articles, and done a great deal of lecturing to Rotary clubs and other bodies. From 1936 to 1939 he became Press Adviser to the Italian Embassy.[32]

One of the most important areas to concern itself with Italian Fascism in the early thirties was, however, a further bastion of High Toryism. This was an influential section of London journalism, based on the *English Review.*

Douglas Jerrold had become editor of this journal in 1931, and had resolved to use it 'as a platform for real Toryism as opposed to the plutocratic Conservatism represented by the official party under … Mr Baldwin's uninspiring leadership'.[33] He immediately appointed Sir Charles Petrie as foreign editor (in later years, he was to claim to have 'discovered' him). Contributors included Captain Bernard Acworth, Sir Arnold Wilson, Lord Lymington, Francis Yeats-Brown, Major E. W. Poison Newman, Commendatore Luigi Villari, Harold Goad, Muriel Currey, Major-General J. F. C. Fuller, and many other figures whom we will meet, in one guise or other, in this and other chapters. A luncheon club was founded, which met at Gatti's restaurant, and which was to have a certain amount of influence. The committee consisted of Jerrold, Petrie, Arnold Lunn, Lord Lymington and Sir Arnold Wilson.[34] Speakers at these lunches included such politicians as Lord Lloyd, Lord Winterton, Leo Amery, Sir Robert Horne, and Lord Carson, as well as the

regular contributors to the *Review.*

It must not be thought that Italian Fascism was the only concern of this journal; contributions covered a wide range of views, and other matters, such as the Bolshevik threat, took up a great deal of space. But there were a large number of articles devoted to Italy, by people like Goad, Villari, Newman, and others. And, of course, with Sir Charles Petrie in charge of foreign affairs the example of Italy was always at the forefront.

Sir Charles Petrie was an Irish baronet who had turned to political history in 1929 with his *History of Government,* in which a major chapter was devoted to the 'Decline of Democracy'. By 1931 he had produced a book entitled *Mussolini* (published by Jerrold's firm, Eyre and Spottiswoode). His admiration for the Italian dictator was to continue throughout the thirties.

Petrie's main concern was always monarchism. For him 'the twentieth century is pre-eminently an age of monarchy', and among the most convincing proofs of this was Mussolini, who was 'the greatest figure of the present age, and perhaps one of the most notable of all time'.[35] He had the advantage, in Petrie's eyes, that he was working within the framework of a traditional monarchy; he was Victor Emmanuel III's Cavour, despite his early republicanism, which had now been disavowed.

The two main achievements of the Fascist state, for Petrie, were the corporate state and the solving of the Vatican problem. On the latter question he was not as blindly euphoric as many other Catholics. He realised that Mussolini was, and always would be, basically anti-clerical, as were many of his followers. The problem, to Mussolini, was a purely political one. 'Both for Fascism and for Italy the backing of the Church would be invaluable if it could be secured on reasonable terms'.[36] Nevertheless, the reconciliation with the Vatican was one of the great successes of the régime.

Above all else, Petrie admired Mussolini the man, and the regeneration of Italy into a great power.

Jerrold appears to have given Petrie a free hand in foreign affairs. He, too, was attracted to Italian Fascism, though as the thirties wore on his attitudes became rather more complicated, as the régime failed to live up to all the ideals that he had admired.

Jerrold's views were always subordinated to his own preoccupations in the realm of British politics. A romantic Catholic in the Chestertonian tradition, he believed that 'the only serious attack on the capitalist tradition today comes from the Right … Only in the Catholic press, inspired by the tradition of Chesterton and Belloc, which is carried on today by McNair Wilson, Christopher Hollis, Douglas Woodruff and Count Michael de la Bédoyère … are bankers attacked, foreigners treated as our equals in integrity and intelligence, or the cause of liberty sustained'.[37] He believed that his era had seen 'an immense recruitment to the intellectual forces of the Right, who have an overwhelming majority of the writers with any serious pretensions to intellect or scholarship'.[38] It was his aim, in the *English Review,* to co-ordinate this intellectual Toryism, and provide a voice for the mass of the nation. 'Between the minority of greedy financiers who wanted to continue the Edwardian gamble in men's lives and the mass of the new trades unionists and bureaucratic planners who wanted to plant themselves securely on the taxpayer's back under the plea of public service, lay the majority of the nation.'[39]

What was needed was a different kind of planning. Appalled by what he saw as the failure of democracy either to make use of the brilliant men in the country, or to right the wrongs produced by capitalism, Jerrold was attracted to a régime that made use of leadership and developed fairness within the economy.

It was for this reason that he was an enthusiast for the corporate state. 'The Corporate State alone', he wrote, 'can combine democracy with efficiency … No social class, no body of political

revolutionaries, neither capital nor labour nor the middle classes … can ever have a majority. There is no body of interested amateurs called the State to which any interest can appeal in the hope of securing, by political pressure, by a "banker's ramp", or a "general strike", an advantage over its fellow interests.'[40]

Democracy, for Jerrold, was a middle-class institution, which 'has its home in the lobbies, the clubs, and in middle-class drawing-rooms'. Fascism, on the other hand, came from the streets and from the land, and was 'the seizure of power by the people themselves'. It was only in the mid-thirties that he began to see that the Italian experiment had fallen below the ideal, that it was as unrepresentative as 'representative government', and that corporate policies were not being properly put into effect, because the state showed signs of becoming 'a sterile bureaucracy without the safety-valve of an alternative group of bureaucrats to play cat and mouse with each other'.[41] This disappointment did not, however, prevent him from supporting Italy at the time of the Abyssinian war.

Another journalist in the same circle who expressed strong admiration for Fascism was Sir John Squire, editor of the *London Mercury*, whose 'overt championing of Mussolini'[42] often seemed naïve. He was a *littérateur* adrift in politics, who saw Mussolini as 'a nice Napoleon, with less education, an equally strong historical sense, and more compassion'.[43] Nevertheless, he was to be of some importance in 1934 as chairman of the January Club.

There is some overlap, in the early thirties, of contributors between the *English Review* and the *Saturday Review*, which was a far less respectable but far more widely-read journal. It was under the eccentric ownership of Lady Houston, and its policies therefore had little of the consistency of the *English Review*. But Sir Charles Petrie occasionally wrote in it, and in the years 1931–6 there was a general tone of pro-Mussolini opinion.

Typical of the *Saturday Review*'s more popular approach to journalism was the full-page picture of Mussolini in the edition of 3 February 1934, under the heading: 'Mussolini – the World's Most Benevolent Ruler': under the picture were the words: 'He dragged Italy out of the mire of Socialism and in a few years has made it the most successful and prosperous country in Europe.'[44] Articles praised the Duce, who 'sets an example of kindness to animals and birds'.[45] Lady Houston herself had a little Belgian griffon dog, which she called Benito 'after Benito Mussolini, whom she admired mainly because he had dosed the Italian Socialists and Communists with castor-oil. In one of her letters to the Duce, she invited him to come over here and treat the English Reds and Pinks in the same fashion'.[46]

Prominent among the contributors who took a pro-Mussolini line was H. Warner Allen, a journalist and author who had been foreign editor of the *Morning Post* in the late twenties. He described Mussolini as 'the greatest man of the twentieth century', who had come to Italy 'at a time when the system … had been weighed and found wanting', and had restored, for Italians, 'faith, belief in themselves and Italy'.[47]

Admiration for Mussolini's Italy was, then, fairly widespread in certain sections of British society when the Nazis came to power in 1933, but above all in those areas of Tory thought which were concerned with the failure of capitalism and the free society to give a fair deal to all. In a more general way, the years 1929–35 produced doubts in many minds about the capacity of democracy to deal with the major problems of the modern world.

The Failure of Democracy, 1929–35

Some observers have suggested that the world depression which started in October 1929 may well have hit Britain rather less than other Western nations. A. J. P. Taylor has pointed out that 'those in

work … were better off than they had ever been',[48] owing to wages remaining stable and prices falling. The fact remains, however, that the population of Britain believed itself to be in the middle of a major crisis; and assuredly the vast numbers of unemployed (which reached 2½ million in December 1930) must have thought so. Throughout the country people were, as is shown in the writings of many in the early thirties, appalled by the position of the unemployed; and the stagnant state of trade and industry appeared to show the country to be in a steep decline. Added to this, the flounderings of the economists caused truly panic-stricken measures to be taken, such as those in Snowden's emergency budget of 1931, which had caused the fall of the Labour Government – violent cuts in wages and in unemployment pay. The people of this country knew there was a crisis, because of what they saw. The question was, how were they going to solve it?

National recovery began in about 1933, though not at first very obviously, and not really as a result of any government measures. Until about 1935, the National Government appeared to the general public to be as incapable of doing anything to solve Britain's basic problems as its predecessor had been. To many of those who observed this situation, it seemed that the old presumptions about the virtues of democracy were being called into question.

The rise of non-democratic governments in so many countries of the world added to the feeling that a new era was emerging. As well as Mussolini (1922) and Mustafa Kemal (1923), Horthy's regency in Hungary, which had started in 1920, was also *de facto* a dictatorship. In the late twenties Pilsudski (1926) in Poland had started the trend in the eastern European states – Yugoslavia, in 1929, and Rumania, in 1931, took on forms of dictatorial government. In Spain, Primo de Rivera ruled from 1923 to 1930, and appeared far more successful than the republic that succeeded him. In 1931, the Japanese military succeeded in installing a non-democratic form of government. In 1932 Salazar became dictator of Portugal. Hitler's success in 1933 appeared to be one more step in the new political process. If one takes into account the Communist dictatorship in Russia, it appeared by 1933 that few major European countries retained democratic institutions. Spain was in chaos, Greece had just returned a royalist majority to parliament (and was to become a dictatorship in 1936), and Bulgaria was on the verge of becoming a dictatorship, which it did in the following year. President Roosevelt's assumption of extraordinary powers, in March 1933, in order to solve the economic crisis in America, seemed to many people a respectable precedent for a curbing, possibly temporary, of British democracy in what seemed a similar situation.

While, in his book *The History of Government*, Sir Charles Petrie had, in 1929, pointed to the 'Decline of Democracy'[49] and to 'that movement towards authority which is so prominent a feature of the political evolution of the day',[50] he had nevertheless made it clear that the Anglo-Saxon countries were an exception, and that 'an acquiescence in the rule of democracy has been the characteristic of nearly every British and American writer of importance'[51] (Belloc and his followers being an exception). It was in the years 1929–35 that a great deal more concern at the failings of democracy was to be felt in this country.

The political scientist, Claud Sutton, in a book written in 1934, but published in 1936, entitled *Farewell to Rousseau: a Critique of Liberal-Democracy*, declared the era of the liberal-democratic state to be at an end. The book ended with these words:

> My belief is, that the present crisis is an ethical crisis rather than an economic crisis, and that it is in the main due to the unethical, ethos-destroying philosophy of 'general will' upon which the modern democratic state has been based; and also that this philosophy is dying. Put away your textbooks on the theory of General Will and on the intricacies of Representation; they will not be needed these fifty years![52]

Not many would have gone as far as Sutton, or with such delight. But there was a great deal of

doubt, even among its strongest supporters, about the capacity of democracy to survive the crisis. One has only to look at the number of book-titles, in the early thirties, which deal with the problem, to see how central it was: e.g., H. G. Wells, *After Democracy* (1932), H. J. Laski, *Democracy in Crisis* (1933), J. R. B. Muir, *Is Democracy a Failure?* (1934), *etc.*

As for the general public, they were less concerned with general trends than with the capacity of parliamentary government to deal with the modern world, and particularly with the economic crisis. The reputation of politicians was at a very low ebb. As Lord Raglan was to put it in his comic contribution to the series *If I were Dictator,* 'the training necessary to turn a man into a front-bench politician makes him unfit to hold any executive office'; in a crisis he depicted the members of the government as taking 'the only action of which Cabinet Ministers are capable – they talked'.[53]

One of the problems appeared to be the party system. A cartoon in *Punch* on 25 March 1931, showed the leaders of the three major parties as jockeys in the Grand National, whose horses had all baulked at a fence called 'Party Discipline'. The caption was 'Refusers all', and a bewildered onlooker was depicted as saying, 'I don't know what they call this race, but it's not my idea of a "Grand National"'.[54] Sir Warden Chilcott, a former Conservative MP who had been one of the strongest supporters of the Lloyd George coalition which had ended in 1922, produced a series of articles in the *Whitehall Gazette* in 1931 which caused considerable interest, and which stirred the Rector of Edinburgh University to give a Rectoral Address on 5 March entitled 'The Present Decline of Parliamentary Government in this Country'.[55] Chilcott's case was a simple one: 'Under the party political system, with the present administration on top, the road to national disaster is an extremely short and precipitous one.' Instead of working together constructively, the party leaders had 'cultivated the art of "out-Nero-ing Nero", for we find them belabouring each other with bladders on sticks, whilst a country rots, and an empire disintegrates'; for their own ends, they had 'lulled the nation into an idle sense of false security'. As far as Chilcott was concerned, 'whatever form of upheaval may be necessary, let us have it and get it over, and that as quickly as possible'. He expressed strong admiration for 'that great Italian patriot, Mussolini'; the position in England today was 'not wholly dissimilar' from that in Italy when Mussolini took over. In any effort at national reconstruction, 'efficient resolute leadership' was imperative, for 'an army of stags led by a lion will always defeat an army of lions led by a stag'.[56]

The formation of the National Government, paradoxically, met with Chilcott's approval, in that it appeared to do away with party politics, and (which gives away some of his motives in his earlier attacks) deal a death-blow to Socialism. Many other observers, however, felt that the country had fallen from the frying-pan into the fire. The government appeared to be 'a morass of compromise', as 'the doctrine of Cabinet responsibility was abandoned as an expedient'. Ramsay MacDonald was 'a wind-filled figurehead'. Almost everything 'seemed to be drift'.[57] Above all, even the general public could see that the nation's situation was in no way improved. Stringent economic measures continued to be taken, in what can now be seen to have been the artificial creation of slump conditions. And meanwhile the government waited hopefully for trade to resume normally.

One of the best expressions of the feelings of this period is Act One of Bernard Shaw's play *On the Rocks* (1933). The scene is Number Ten, Downing Street and the hero is the Prime Minister (non-Conservative) of a National Government. The streets are full of unemployed. As the Prime Minister puts it, 'They think because I'm Prime Minister I'm Divine Providence and can find jobs for them before trade revives.' In a series of conversations, he is faced with various home truths. His Chief Commissioner of Police tells him that 'nowadays nobody outside the party cliques cares a brass button for the House of Commons'. His wife informs him that he doesn't govern the

country, because ‘the country isn’t governed: it just slummocks along anyhow’. After further confrontations, the Prime Minister meets a mysterious lady who promises to try to cure him of ‘that very common English complaint, an underworked brain’. He has ‘a bad case of frivolity, possibly incurable’, but she guarantees that after a fortnight at her private retreat in Wales he will begin to think before he talks. ‘Your dead mind will come to life. I shall make a man of you.’ Act Two of the play, which is Shaw’s personal response to the situation, deals with the results of the changes in the Prime Minister. He undertakes a number of positive acts, much to the consternation of his associates, who ‘could have sworn that if there was a safe man in England that could be trusted to talk and say nothing, to thump the table and do nothing, Arthur Chavender was that man’. But the Prime Minister has become aware of something important, and in a long speech he expresses it:

> The people of this country, and of all the European countries, and of America, are at present sick of being told that, thanks to democracy, they are the real government of the country. They know very well that they don’t govern and can’t govern and know nothing about government except that it always supports profiteering, and doesn’t really respect anything else, no matter what party flag it waves. They are sick of twaddle about liberty when they have no liberty. They are sick of idling and loafing about on the dole when they are not drudging for wages too beggarly to pay the rents of anything better than overcrowded one-room tenements. They are sick of me and sick of you and sick of the whole lot of us. They want to see something done that will give them decent employment … They can’t set matters to right themselves; so they want rulers who will discipline them and make them do it instead of making them do the other thing. They are ready to go mad with enthusiasm for any man strong enough to make them do anything, even if it is only Jew baiting, provided it’s something tyrannical, something coercive, something that we all pretend no Englishman would submit to, though we’ve known ever since we gave them the vote that they’d submit to anything.

He is soon made aware, however, of the impossibility of doing anything by legal means; and he is horrified by the idea of a descent to the streets. He knows what is wrong, and what could be done. But he is not the man to lead a revolt, and he would ‘hate the man who will carry it through for his cruelty and the desolation he will bring on us and our like’. The play ends on this pessimistic note, with Unemployed England condemned to sing, as best it could, the song ‘England, arise!’

It is true to say that most of those who saw the shortcomings of democracy were not particularly enamoured of the alternative of dictatorship. Admiration might be expressed for foreign experiments, but the mood was more one of helpless pessimism than of a positive search for a way out. There were a significant number of people, however, who, like Sir John Reith, could admire a dictator like Mussolini for ‘accomplishing high democratic purpose by means which, though not democratic, were the only possible ones’.[58] And there were a number of others who felt that a similar experiment would be not only possible but advantageous in Great Britain.

Sir Oswald Mosley, 1931–2

Mosley’s British Union of Fascists grew out of the New Party which had been formed when he left the Labour Party in February 1931. Several commentators have depicted the change which took place in the party and its membership in the years 1931–2.[59] What will be of importance to our study, both for these years, and for later developments, is an assessment of the leader’s character and motivation; for this there are two extremely useful sources in the form of the diaries of two

men who were in close contact with Mosley in the years 1931–2: Harold Nicolson and Robert Bruce Lockhart. The picture that emerges is of a man governed more by impulse than by reflection, whose changeability of outlook led to many changes of direction in the movement that he founded. The measured deliberations which some commentators have seen behind his actions fade as this picture emerges; and this picture will be of prime importance in our assessment of the later changes in the British Union of Fascists.

Mosley, who had been the one member of the Labour Party to put forward constructive proposals for the solution of the country's economic problems, and who had been ignored, was a brilliant and ambitious man, considered by many to be a potential Prime Minister. In May 1930, after the rejection of his memorandum, he had resigned from the Cabinet, partly because it had done so little for the unemployed, but partly to 'strengthen his position in the party' after they lost the next election.[60] Though his success within the party, during the course of the year, was not as great as he had hoped, we find him in September, still a parliamentarian, agreeing with Lord Beaverbrook that parliament must be reformed, and that Fascist methods were out, because 'so far feeling is against the professional politicians, but not against parliamentary traditions'.[61] In this he shared the view of many contemporaries, who were convinced that the old parliamentary system was ideally suited to dealing with political questions, but not very good at economic questions, as was shown by the current crisis.[62] Towards the end of 1930, disillusioned by his lack of success at the Party Conference, he began to think in terms of 'a new party of younger Nationalists',[63] though he was uncertain about when to launch it, particularly because of lack of money and of press support. When the possibility of the future Lord Nuffield providing financial support came up, he decided to 'launch his manifesto practically creating the National Party'.[64] After Morris had produced £50,000 in January 1931, the die was cast, and in February Mosley and five supporters (including his wife) left the Parliamentary Labour Party. The 'New Party' was launched on 1 March.

It must be stressed that this party, and Mosley's own future, were conceived in parliamentary terms. The six parliamentary members still had their seats, and the party proceeded to contest a by-election at Ashton-under-Lyne as early as April. Though the result was disappointing, the New Party candidate saved his deposit. Mosley became involved in various discussions with major political figures. On 21 July he, Lloyd George and Winston Churchill met at a specially organised private dinner party, at which the prospect of together forming a National Opposition in the event of a coalition between Baldwin and MacDonald was mooted.[65] A month later, two days after the formation of the National Government, Mosley privately expressed himself delighted with the prospects. The Labour Party were a rump 'without a single man of any eminence'. The National Government's lack of a constructive policy would mean that the economic situation would get worse. 'That is when the New Party will come in. Tom [Mosley] has been seeing a good deal of Winston. He claims he will get support from Labour and Conservatives and L.G.'[66] Within a few days there had been an approach from Churchill for Mosley to combine, as Harold Nicolson put it, with 'him and the Tory toughs in opposition'. If only a few of the Mosley candidates got in at the election, there was every chance of some kind of political combination in which their views would be heard.

Meanwhile, various changes had been happening within the movement. It was veering to the Right; and one finds it hard to avoid coming to the conclusion that this was because help of any kind was important, and more help was likely from the Right. In February, Mosley had been convinced that his 'young men's party', though it would break across party lines, 'could only come through the Labour Party. Certainly, the young men in the Conservative Party are "dead".'[67] By May he found that the main response to the New Party, 'which is very encouraging', came from

the younger Conservative group, and was 'distinctly Fascist in character'.[68] The negotiations with Churchill showed the way he was now moving, a way in which some of his earliest adherents refused to follow him. On 23 July John Strachey and Allan Young resigned, because they felt that Mosley was 'drifting very rapidly back to Toryism',[69] and was 'acquiring a Tory mind'.[70]

Another development was the Youth Movement (originally started in order to steward the party meetings, which were becoming subject to rowdy opposition), and the movement's growing interest in Fascism. By May, people had become aware of Mosley's use of violent methods. There was talk of 'fisticuffers',[71] and it became evident that there were two distinct elements in the party – the intellectuals like Sacheverell Sitwell, and the toughs like the boxer 'Kid' Lewis.[72] In July Dr Joad left the party 'because he felt it was about to subordinate intelligence to muscular bands of young men'.[73]

In the atmosphere of 1931, when the Nazi Party was achieving fame in Germany, people like Allan Young spoke of 'the danger of Hitlerism'.[74] And Mosley himself had clearly studied the German movement closely, as was evidenced by a conversation he had with Bruce Lockhart on the latter's return from a visit to Germany to 'write up' the movement.[75] But Mosley's growing enthusiasm for Fascism had a particularly Italian flavour as might be expected at that period.

As it became clear that there was going to be an election in October, Mosley appears, as so often at moments of crisis, to have been undecided, and subject to swift changes of mood. He was 'being approached on all sides to join some combination'. On the other hand, combination with the Conservatives could mean stagnation. Was *fascismo* a better idea? It would avoid losing the party's 'imaginative appeal to youth, novelty and excitement'.[76] Whereas in August he had felt that, by addressing its appeal to the 'upper and lower middle-classes', the party could possibly have got half a dozen members into the House, provided the General Election did not come before February,[77] by late September he was gloomy about the election prospects, and almost thinking of abstaining from Parliament. He was even considering doing a deal with the National Party,[78] and on 1 October he admitted to Harold Nicolson that he had had a secret meeting with Neville Chamberlain, and that arrangements for a secret deal to get some New Party members in were in progress.[79] Obviously, Mosley was still extremely keen on a *parliamentary* role for the party.

The election results were disastrous. The New Party put up twenty-four candidates, all of whom were defeated, and only two of whom saved their deposits. Mosley's reactions were, as usual, changeable. In August, foreseeing the possibility of such failure, he had made emergency plans for his career; he would retire from public life for ten years, study economics, and on his return 'be no older than Bonar Law was when he first entered politics'.[80] Now, in the immediate aftermath of the election, though worried about funds, he was 'not worried about our eclipse … He thinks he may get in at a by-election in eighteen months and that meanwhile the paper [*Action*] is our central hope'.[81] Within a month, however, he saw things in a different light. He decided to concentrate on the 'club' side of the movement, because 'a new movement cannot be made within the frame of a parliamentary party'.[82] Meanwhile, he must let his parliamentary ambitions rest: he was 'destined to lead the Tory Party … and … must rest in patience till that moment comes, and meanwhile travel and write books'.[83]

The next few months were to show a caution, in relation to public commitments, which bore out these statements. In December, when Lord Rothermere offered to put the whole Harmsworth Press at his disposal, Mosley said that he wanted 'to lie low for a bit but would be grateful for it later'. When Winston Churchill tried to get him to stand, with his support, at the Westminster by-election, he again procrastinated 'till the reaction against the National Government assumes a more definite shape'.[84] The impression one gets is one of indecision in relation to the future direction

the party was to take.

It was the early months of 1932 which were to decide this direction. In December the journal *Action* had failed for lack of funds, and in January Mosley and Nicolson went on a fact-finding tour to Italy. Mosley's changeability, and openness to influence, was still showing itself clearly. Under the influence of their friend Christopher Hobhouse, who had just visited Germany, was enthusiastic about the Nazis, and brought the message from them that the New Party 'should have begun in the alleys, not in Gordon Square', Mosley talked of centring the movement on the 'clubs'; the youth movement 'would correspond to the SS or *Schützstaffel* organisation of the Nazis'.[85] When, however, Nicolson insisted that the movement should be constitutional and that Mosley should enter Parliament, he played with this idea: 'He thinks he could do so with the backing of Winston and the Harmsworth Press.'[86] Mosley found Mussolini 'affable but unimpressive';[87] but he was clearly excited by the atmosphere of Fascism. As Nicolson said, 'He is a romantic. That is a great failing.'[88]

On Mosley's return to London, his mood was still mixed. Mussolini had suggested he should call himself Fascist, but 'what he would like would be to lie low till the autumn, write a book, then rope in Winston Churchill, Lloyd, Rothermere and if possible Beaverbrook, into a League of Youth. Then launch an autumn campaign'.[89] At this stage he was worried as to whether the Press lords would press him into acting too early. Within a fortnight we find Rothermere, however, holding back till autumn, as though Mosley were pressing for early action.[90] The picture is one of uncertainty and of instant, often contradictory, decisions by Mosley.

What happened between January and April has never been properly explained by commentators, and seems impossible to assess accurately. What appears clear is that his Italian trip influenced him far more than had appeared from Nicolson's diary at the time. On 1 February he wrote an extremely enthusiastic article about Mussolini in the *Daily Mail*, and in the same month he began, through Dr Forgan, negotiations with an existing Fascist group, the British Fascists, with a view to a takeover.[91]

By April, he had expressly counted out parliamentary action, and decided to concentrate on Fascist extra-parliamentary methods. Approaches had been made to him from the Conservative and Labour Parties, and from figures like Churchill and Rothermere; but he had now decided to dissolve the New Party, and to concentrate on Nupa (the youth movement). He announced that he would try to co-ordinate all the existing Fascist groups with Nupa to form a central Fascist body under his leadership. (His negotiations with the British Fascists had been secret, and seemed to be meeting with success.) When challenged, he explained his reasons: 'He says that it would be impossible for him to re-enter the "machine" of one of the older parties. That by doing so he would again have to place himself in a strait-waistcoat. That he has no desire for power on those terms. That he is convinced that we are entering a phase of abnormality and that he does not wish to be tarred with the brush of the old régime. That he thinks, as leader of the Fascists, he could accomplish more than as a party backbencher, and that in fact he is prepared to run the risk of further failure, ridicule and assault, rather than to allow the active forces of this country to fall into other hands.'[92] A clear line had now developed, and he was not to be deterred from his 'Mussolinian' ideas even by the possibility of a parliamentary seat for himself.[93]

Negotiations continued with the British Fascists, and also, now, with the Imperial Fascist League, with whom Mosley chaired a joint meeting on 27 April. By May both movements had refused to join (though the most active members of the BF came over).

The rest of 1932 was devoted to the organisation of the new movement. Mosley spent May and June writing *The Greater Britain*, its manifesto, and on 1 October it was launched as *The British Union of Fascists*.

The policy of the movement was basically corporatist; but it was its methods which singled it out from much of the rest of the pro-corporatist thought which was so common in the early thirties. A large part of its appeal was to be to the working class, and for this reason it had to have colour and excitement. Mosley had long been aware that 'the working class have practically no sense of being ridiculous in the way we have, and … their very drab lives give them a great thirst for colour and drama: hence the excesses of the cinema'.[94] The blackshirt uniform gave them some of this colour; and in Mosley himself the movement had an outstanding orator, which was what the other Fascist movements had lacked. The intellectuals might leave the movement, but youth and the working classes flocked in. For the first few years there was also considerable support in the upper middle classes, and particularly in Conservative circles. Despite reports of rowdyism and violence, the movement retained a good deal of respectability until late 1934, as the violence of its opponents, and the weapons that they used, were continually kept before the public eye as a kind of vindication.

Those who described the movement at this early stage were torn between the epithets 'Hitlerite' and 'Mussolinian'. In the atmosphere of the moment, these terms meant much the same. Bruce Lockhart attempted a closer definition when he described it as 'Mussolini in policy and Hitlerite in organisation'.[95] Mosley had learned a certain amount from the Hitler experiment, but the inspiration for the movement, at this stage, was mainly Italian. Its emblem was the 'fasces', as was that of Mussolini's movement; its outline of the corporate state was on the Italian model; Mosley's first great foreign appearance was in Rome in April 1933, when he appeared with Mussolini on the balcony of his palace and took the Fascist salute.[96] There appears to have been less contact at this stage with the Hitler régime. Of course, in 1932 it was not in power, and Nicolson's reports made it out to have 'missed the boat' after its initial successes in 1931.[97] The Italian connexion may also have been strengthened by reactions from the other side. The Nazis appear to have regarded Mosley's movement as rather dilettante, but Mussolini was friendly. As Bruce Lockhart was to note in 1934, 'Hitler's people are not very keen on Tom. Mussolini, on the other hand, takes a lively interest.'[98] Possibly one reason for the lack of importance of the German connexion in 1933–4, however, was to be the feeling that Nazi 'excesses' were alienating public opinion. As we shall see,[99] it became regarded as important to dissociate true Fascism from 'what had happened in Germany under Nazism'.[100] It was not until late 1934 that the movement's connection with Germany was to become more important.

Be that as it may, the BUF's claim was to be a British movement, to deal with British problems. *The Greater Britain* contained, especially in relation to the Empire, some very precise concerns which were particular to this country. In one sense, the BUF presented the British public with a very specific choice unrelated to Continental concerns, and to the claims of other corporatists.

Fascism for Great Britain: The Italophiles and the BUF, 1933–4

In the years 1933 and 1934, there was considerable interest in the idea of a new type of régime for Great Britain. On the one hand, there were Mosley and his newly-formed British Union of Fascists; on the other, there were the Italophiles and Corporatists of the type we have already seen. Between them, they managed at this time to appeal to a considerable section of Conservative opinion in the country. The most interesting thing about this phase of politics, in the very years when Hitler had come to power, was the small part that Nazism played in all this.

This is all the more remarkable, in that the advent of the Nazis to power appears to have spurred on a new and widespread interest in the concept of dictatorship in the countries of Europe, and particularly in Great Britain and France.[101] In both countries, the mere word 'dictator' caused

wide interest, and could be used as a gimmick to sell almost anything. Methuen's series *If I were Dictator* is a good example; it consisted of a number of books written by people of extremely different views, many of whom could by no stretch of the imagination be described as of Fascist leanings; some were serious, some were comic; contributors included Julian Huxley, Lord Dunsany, Jimmy Maxton, St John Ervine, Lord Raglan and Vernon Bartlett. That a publishing house should have launched a series under this title shows their conviction that the concept of dictatorship was at the front of the public's mind. This was borne out by the large number of publications which treated it from various points of view, such as *Democracy and Dictatorship* (H. Sellon, 1934), *Dictators and Distress of Nations* (F. D. Frost, 1934), *etc.* It was interest, rather than support, which was expressed in most of these publications; some were violently antagonistic; but the debate was there.

If the latest dictatorship in Germany had sparked off this general interest, however, it was not central to the thoughts of those who were most keenly interested in the installation of a new régime in England. Though for some of them Hitlerism was deserving of admiration, it was a further example of the trend rather than the main example to be followed; and for some of them it was an aberration.

Throughout the thirties it will be impossible to make complete generalisations about the reactions to Nazism of the admirers of Mussolini's Italy, except to say that for many of them the need to make any parallels did not even seem to exist. Even in the late thirties, when the German question loomed large, writers like Walter Starkie,[102] Goad,[103] etc., concentrated on Italian problems and appear to have ignored it. There were, however, others like J. S. Barnes, who at that stage was to link Germany with Italy, perceiving a 'moral fervour running like an enveloping fire right through the Italian and German peoples today, burning up the chaff … but sparing the wheat'.[104] And a political journalist like Yeats-Brown was, by the late thirties, expressing considerable admiration for Hitler's régime. Other Italophiles strongly reacted against the Nazi régime, which they saw as 'barbaric'. Some of the Catholic supporters of Mussolini and Franco, particularly, pointed to the pagan aspects of much of Nazism, those very aspects which appealed so much to people like Rolf Gardiner.

If it is impossible to make too many generalisations about the eventual reactions of the Mussolini enthusiasts to Nazism, it is possible, in 1933 and 1934, to note that German questions were at that stage of very much lesser importance. In one sense, Germany was indeed before the public eye in these years, particularly because of various excesses; and it was at times necessary, in face of Nazi unpopularity, to make certain distinctions. Many new converts to the concept of dictatorship, of course, lumped Mussolini, Hitler, Pilsudski, Atatürk, etc., together as examples to be followed. For many of those who had long followed the Mussolinian model, however, the new régime was at most a matter of interest, and a fascinating new development. And for some of them it was very disquieting indeed.

The *English Review* group, for example, received the Nazi régime in no sense of welcome. Douglas Jerrold, the editor, had mixed views. From the first he was appalled by 'the revival of the persecution of the Jews', and felt that 'the German anti-Jewish campaign … has perhaps irreparably damaged the prestige of the new régime in this country'.[105] He was, of course, worried at the Communist alternative, and gradually came to feel that, while it had to be said with confidence that 'in its present shape it [the Nazi régime] inspires little confidence in its constructive abilities', the 'forcible overthrow of Herr Hitler's administration would be a disaster'.[106] This ambivalent attitude continued right through to 1939. While he could not sympathize with the 'ignorant and sometimes malicious attacks on Herr Hitler's régime', he was nevertheless only too aware that it had 'grave defects'.[107] By 1938 Jerrold, while by no means an

'enthusiast', (his *Times* obituary in 1964 described him as having 'detested Nazism')[108] was definitely an 'appeaser', as his signing of the Link letter to *The Times* was to signify.

Jerrold's aim, as editor, was to get articles on matters of European importance, whatever the views expressed. So, in April 1933, he published E. W. D. Tennant's article 'Herr Hitler and his Policy: March 1933', with the following comment: 'The Nazis constitute, owing to their novelty, a peculiarly incalculable factor, and that is why we publish, without sharing all his judgments, Mr Tennant's article.'[109] Other very occasional pro-Nazi articles were published in the *English Review* (five major articles in the three years 1933–5: two by Tennant, one each by Gordon Bolitho, General J. F. C. Fuller, and Sir Arnold Wilson), and these stood alongside several other articles and reviews which took either an anti-Nazi or a neutral position. Above all, however, Sir Charles Petrie, the Foreign Editor, was consistently anti-Nazi.

For Petrie, though it was undeniable that 'Hitler would not have succeeded but for the achievements of Mussolini', any resemblance between the movements was accidental. 'They both represent the reaction against the old democratic order, and that is all.' Not only was it 'an impertinence to put Hitler in the same category as Mussolini', it was also clear that the movements differed entirely. 'It is difficult to believe that the Nazi movement is much more than the old Prussianism in a new form', he wrote in May 1933. Fascism worked through the old forms, but the Nazis had deliberately broken with the past, and had 'displayed no great disposition to adopt the principle of the Corporate State'. Fascism stood for the legacy of Roman civilisation, 'for the family, for religion, and for discipline'. None of this had any appeal for the Nazis, 'who would apply eugenic tests to the relations of the sexes, who wish religion to be a department of State, and who appear to prefer emotionalism to the practice of self-control'. The Nazis stood for 'considered cynicism and ruthless egotism'; they had 'no great European sense', unlike Fascism, which was 'in the main stream of the great European tradition'; and even if there was much that was commendable in their wish to purify their country after fifteen years of Socialism, their methods were 'deplorable'.[110]

In his monthly article for the *English Review*, and in occasional articles for the *Saturday Review* and *The Nineteenth Century and After*, Petrie continued this line. 'Hitler's spokesmen, *more Germanico*, seem to prefer to dwell upon what is repulsive to the ordinary civilised man in other countries',[111] he wrote in June 1933. A month later he declared that it would be 'the disgrace of Europe' if Vienna was occupied by 'Hitler and his brown-shirted hooligans'.[112] In 1934, the Roehm purge evoked similar reactions: it had 'shocked the conscience of the world', and it was impossible to describe it 'by any other phrase than cold-blooded murder'.[113] Dollfuss's murder was laid at Hitler's door a month later, and Petrie categorically stated that Hitler had 'proved to be no Mussolini'.[114] In 1935 he declared that 'Nazi rule in Vienna would mean a relapse into that barbarism which exists wherever the Swastika has prevailed'.[115] This attitude was to continue right up to 1936.

Like Petrie, Lady Houston's *Saturday Review* in this period continued to praise Mussolini to the skies, while violently attacking the Nazis. Editorials deplored 'Nazi Jew-baiting'[116] and those 'silly people jabbering' that we should side with Germany in the next war.[117] Books against Germany were reviewed favourably, those for Germany were attacked.[118] The Foreign Correspondent up to 1935, Robert Machray, continually referred to Hitler's warlike aims, and called for rearmament. Other contributors who warned of the German danger and criticised the Nazi régime included Nera Maxwell, James Wentworth Day, and Clive Rattigan. Lady Houston herself wrote a letter to the journal in 1934, in which she declared that 'Hitler has made two mistakes – first his ruthless persecution of the Jews – but a still greater blunder in his attempt to defy his Holiness the Pope'.[119] The Roehm purge brought particularly strong reactions.[120]

Yeats-Brown's attitudes to Germany at this time were sympathetic, but Germany was not central to his thoughts. In 1932, on a visit to Germany, he had noted the 'drug-sellers and inverts' and the contrast between extreme poverty, which forced many boys and girls to 'sell their bodies', and the 'neo-Neronian fiddling and feasting' of West Berlin. In such a situation, he said, 'If I were a young German I should be a Nazi.'[121] Now, in 1933, with the Nazis in power, he was still impressed by their 'passionate and selfless concern for the working people', but felt that their weaknesses were many. 'They are fanatical, and sometimes barbarous, but behind their treatment of racial minorities they take their stand upon a positive and militant Christianity, putting the common interest before self … The Germans intend to re-establish agriculture, and abolish the terrible curse of unemployment … Behind the Nazi bombast there is an ideal of brotherhood, and a soul behind the flaunting swastikas.'[122] These things were what had attracted Yeats-Brown to Mussolini. Mentions of Nazism are, however, rare in his writings at this stage (the quotation above is from a review of the English expurgated edition of *Mein Kampf*). It was only later in the thirties that Germany took more importance in his thinking.

Mosley's new movement had got off to an exciting start, with rowdy public meetings and confrontations with the extreme left. As Skidelsky has put it, 'this was the period when its stewarding was at its least restrained'.[123] The culmination was a meeting in Manchester on 12 March 1933, when the violence was such that the police intervened. By May serious observers like Kingsley Martin were worried at the 'dangerous progress' Mosley was making.[124] The BUF gave every appearance of becoming a mass movement. By October Mosley was declaring that he was 'making great progress in town and country alike',[125] and Esmond Harmsworth was predicting that 'in five years' time Tom Mosley and the Fascist Party will be a power in the land'.[126] Mosley now turned his attention to achieving respectability and powerful support, and Dr Forgan, the deputy leader of the movement, began holding dinners, and other private functions, to attract important figures from business, the professions, and the arts to support of the BUF.

Meanwhile a completely separate appeal for a corporatist experiment in Great Britain had taken place, centred mainly upon the *English Review* group. It ran parallel with, and came to a head at the same time as, the group's strong support for Lord Lloyd in an attempt to oust MacDonald and Baldwin. According to contemporary accounts, about fifty or sixty MPs were interested in this challenge,[127] which had grown in October and November, the climax being the *English Review* dinner on 21 November presided over by Lord Carson.

Interest in corporatism and in dictatorship had continued, during 1933, on a purely theoretical basis as well, of course. Sir Charles Petrie, for example, had set up a group for the study of Fascism, with Miss Muriel Currey as secretary; Petrie, too, had been among the speakers to the conference at Ashridge Conservative College in August, out of which came the volume *The Man and the Hour: Studies of Six Great Men of Our Time* (1934), edited by Arthur Bryant. Petrie spoke on Mussolini, Tennant on Hitler, Bruce Lockhart on Lenin, *etc.* But Petrie, as a historian, appears to have treated Fascism more as an object for study; Jerrold, Yeats-Brown and others saw it as a lesson for Great Britain.

It can hardly be coincidence that the strongest statements about corporatism by the *English Review* group should have coincided with Yeats-Brown's short editorship of *Everyman* from September to November 1933, and also with the Lloyd campaign. What is interesting in these statements is the attempt to appeal to a wider British public by dissociating themselves from foreign influences (making this out to be a purely *British* experiment), coupled with a similar dissociation from extremist groups, and particularly from the BUF. This must have been in order to attract the average Englishman, and indeed the average Tory MP, to reforming parliamentary administration.

An early article which showed the way people's minds were turning came from a prominent Conservative well known in local government, Sir Henry Fairfax-Lucy,[128] who advocated, in the *Saturday Review* in April, 'a drastic reform in parliamentary government', which had been 'killed by universal suffrage'. There should be 'a system of indirect election through County and City Councils (reinforced by nominated members from the great services of the State)'. Any organisation that 'eliminated the evils of universal suffrage … whether we call this system Fascist or Corporative', would deserve well of its country and the Empire, he wrote.[129]

In June Jerrold took up the cudgels. 'The Conservative Party must turn its back on the present parliamentary system', he wrote, 'in favour of a system which will restore the reality of self-government in the appropriate spheres and enable a strong central government to speak for the nation, and not merely for a class, on national issues. This means the adoption of functional and not regional representation'.[130]

The appeal was clearly for some kind of corporative system, to be brought about not by revolution but by a decision of the Conservative Parliamentary Party.

Francis Yeats-Brown took over the editorship of *Everyman* on 29 September, with the express intention of using the journal to introduce corporatism to England as a viable political doctrine. 'We believe in a revision of our constitution on the lines of the Corporate State', he wrote in his notes. 'Italian Fascism would not work in England but we must be governed by a small group of men, or one man with dictatorial power, for a period of years … Our parliamentary system is out of date. It neither guards our liberties nor protects our purse.'[131]

The theme of the *Englishness* of this programme, and the playing down of Italian models, was to be the hallmark of *Everyman*'s short life under Yeats-Brown. On 6 October the editorial stressed that 'we are not Fascists. Fascism is a foreign culture. We are English. Italians, Russians and Germans have solved their problems in their own way. The British way will be different'.[132] In a way which showed that he considered Mosley to be some kind of foreign import, Yeats-Brown continued by dissociating his campaign from the BUF: 'We do not wear black shirts, nor are we in any way associated with Sir Oswald Mosley, beyond sharing some of his ideals.' Though they respected the work the BUF was doing in 'canalising the spirit of service and sacrifice latent in the youth of the nation', and in fighting unemployment, abolishing slums, and breaking down the barriers of class, the *Everyman* group, Yeats-Brown insisted, was independent. It had, in common with the BUF, a belief in the corporate State: 'But our interpretation of the corporate state as applied to England may be different to Sir Oswald Mosley's.' The corporate state was too little known in England, and had had a bad press, 'being associated in the popular mind with methods of castor-oil and violence'. This was nonsense. The corporate state was a practical solution to the problems caused by capitalism.[133]

When we talk about the *Everyman* group, we are really talking about the *English Review* group. Yeats-Brown's main contributors included Jerrold, Sir John Squire and J. B. Morton ('Beachcomber'). Jerrold, during October and November, continued to stress the need for corporatism in England, while dissociating this view from 'extremism' and 'Fascism'. 'Our people are wisely distrustful of extremes, whether Fascist or Communist',[134] he wrote in the *English Review,* while in *Everyman* he stressed that 'the corporate state has nothing necessarily to do with Fascism, or the colour of men's shirts'.[135] If the British were to escape from the 'nightmare follies' of the present political situation, they must turn to the corporate state, which could 'provide a planned economy without the intolerable evils of constant and ill-informed political interference with trade and industry'.[136]

While Jerrold was, at this stage, cagey about the question of dictatorship, J. B. Morton[137] believed in calling a spade a spade. 'The machinery of parliamentary government, which works

clumsily and laboriously, is incapable of dealing with the kind of crisis we are facing today', he wrote. 'You might as well expect a Mothers' Meeting to conduct a military campaign. Let anybody suggest that what we need is the strong leadership of one man – a king for preference, or else a dictator – and at once he will be told that the English would not stand for it. We would not stand for it! – we who stand for every kind of humbug and state interference under the sun.'[138]

On 10 November Yeats-Brown produced his last number as editor of *Everyman*; the journal had aroused considerable enthusiasm in certain quarters, as was shown by the many letters of congratulation which had come in, but the directors strongly disapproved of the line that was being taken, and Yeats-Brown was sacked.

This was the month in which the campaign centred round Lord Lloyd came to a head. As Jerrold later put it, 'we were not, of course, proposing to appeal primarily to the people. We decided that neither through the House of Commons nor through the electorate could salvation come, but through the party.' In other words, the appeal was to be to the Conservative Party, in which 'the discontent already existed'. Lord Lloyd might have seemed a good choice for a rallying-point. He was one of the prominent, and disgruntled, Tories who had no place in the National Government. As High Commissioner of Egypt from 1925 to 1929 he had governed with viceregal pomp; his dismissal by the Labour Government in 1929 had been preceded by considerable disagreement with the Conservative Foreign Minister, Austen Chamberlain. Together with Churchill, he had headed the group of Conservative die-hards who opposed the India Bill. In the early thirties he seemed a natural centre for those who were dissatisfied with the Baldwin–MacDonald partnership. He was, as Jerrold put it, 'the only man in the party who could rely on the support of the die-hards and who could yet command a following among the young men'.[139]

The Lloyd dinner was a resounding failure. Why was this? After all, they had 'the goodwill of a minority of the prominent backbenchers in the House … a good Press … support in the constituencies'. Yet the audience was 'stone cold', as the chairman, Lord Carson, put it.[140] Was this due to Lloyd's lack of oratorical ability? (Lord Halifax was to say of him that he was 'not naturally a good speaker, both his voice and argument lacking the persuasive quality which speaking demands'.)[141] Jerrold put it down rather to the fact that Lloyd himself was not aiming at the party leadership, but at a change of policy in which he might take part. But 'the world of politics is not interested except in a crisis in challenges to policy but only in challenges to politicians'. Above all, 'the audience consisted of devoted subscribers of the *English Review* who had never read a line of what had been written there'.[142]

There may be a certain amount of truth in this. The attendance of 350 were united in one thing; opposition to the present leadership of the National Government. Many of them, however, would have been completely lost with the positive policies being put forward by the *English Review* group. This must have been particularly true of the MPs, for most of whom it was merely a question of a challenge to the parliamentary leadership, and not a change in the form of government. The dinner, and the campaign, showed the danger of the presumption that shared dislikes meant shared prescriptions for change. In a sense, the differences between writers and politicians became clear.

In the immediate aftermath of the débâcle, Jerrold came out with possibly his strongest statement of the need for a dictator, to change things. In December's *English Review,* echoing what J. B. Morton had written in *Everyman* in November, he wrote: 'There is no folly more fashionable than the saying that the English will never tolerate a dictatorship. Under constitutional forms of a very flimsy character the English have invariably insisted on being governed either by a close oligarchy or a virtual dictatorship.' He then went on to say that they were now ruled by the dictatorship of the party machines. 'It is because the party machines have notably failed to govern

that they are losing the public confidence, and unless Parliament under universal franchise can fulfil the indispensable task of leadership, a dictatorship is not only inevitable but necessary.'[143]

It was very shortly after the Lloyd episode that an important group was formed, in which many of those who had been attracted to Fascism from various directions took part. This was the January Club, a product of the dinners and functions which Dr Forgan of the BUF had been holding in the autumn of 1933.

From October onwards, as we have seen, Mosley had started a new initiative, attempting to attract prominent people to the movement. The novelist Cecil Roberts has described a dinner at the Cavalry Club in October, which he had attended with Yeats-Brown: 'I found myself in a mixed company, very few of whom I knew, but there were some well-known persons, among them the poet-critic J. C. Squire … Others were political candidates, barristers, business directors. They were mostly in their middle forties, united by one thing, their present discontent.'[144] As he put it in another account, 'the majority appeared to be tentative enquirers like myself. Some of the speeches struck a note of accord in their deprecation of the lassitude of our Government. On invitation I spoke myself, expressing all my pent-up indignation and alarm. Sir John Squire, who was present, an enquirer like myself, repeatedly congratulated me on that speech … Of course the word went round that I had become a Fascist'.[145] One of Roberts's accounts of the dinner ends with him listening to a violent speech by the secretary of the BUF, which so shocked him that he hurried out. 'The effect of his tirade was to kill any thought of belonging to a party that harboured such a man … Going down into Piccadilly I was accosted by Squire … I asked him what he thought of the meeting. "I'd sooner take rat poison than join up with a fellow like that … Who the hell is the reptile anyhow?"'[146] Squire and Roberts nevertheless both spoke at the first meeting of the January Club in 1934 (Squire having become chairman). It is significant that, however much he disliked a spokesman of the BUF, Squire remained chairman of the January Club; membership of the latter did not imply any commitment to the former. Roberts, who was accused by the BUF, in May, of 'flirting with Fascism',[147] rather than having a commitment to it, joined Philip Gibbs that spring on a visit to Europe; he expressed strong admiration for Fascist Italy;[148] again the connexion between disapproval of the BUF and approval of Fascism appears to have been natural.

Be that as it may, the description of many of the dinner guests as 'enquirers' was an apt one. Historians of the BUF have pointed to the January Club as primarily a 'front organisation' for Mosley's movement, used to 'infiltrate the Establishment',[149] or to 'permeate the Establishment'.[150] In early 1934 Mosley's movement had gained the support of an influential section of the Conservative press, when Lord Rothermere started a campaign in the *Daily Mail* with an article of praise entitled 'Hurrah for the Blackshirts' on 8 January. (Typical of Rothermere's approach was the statement, on 15 January, that the BUF was 'a well-organised party of the Right ready to take over responsibility for national affairs with the same directness of purpose and energy of method as Hitler and Mussolini have displayed'.)[151] On 10 February Lady Houston's *Saturday Review* started a similar campaign with an article by Mosley himself, accompanied by a full-page picture of 'Sir Oswald Mosley – who is daily gathering more and more disciples'.[152] The January Club is seen, by historians of the BUF, as a parallel to all this.

If it was a 'front organisation', however, many of the participants may well have been unaware of it. The BUF did, in fact, gradually take it over, but in its initial stages it was very much a discussion group, in which all those who were interested in the various forms of Fascism could participate. This did not mean that the majority of members were primarily interested in the BUF. Forgan may well, eventually, have been 'able to control the January Club',[153] as Benewick suggests; but he was only one of the main organisers (the others being Squire, Yeats-Brown and Captain H. W. Luttman-Johnson, none of whom were members of the BUF). Yeats-Brown and his

collaborators on *Everyman* had been at pains, only two months before, to point out that they were in no way connected with Sir Oswald Mosley and the BUF, even if they shared some of its aims. Combination, in a club, with members of the BUF, was not only possible, however, but desirable, given the common interest in corporatism and the Club's concern with discussion.

The stated objects of the Club made it appear a continuation of the kind of study groups on Fascism which Sir Charles Petrie, Goad and Miss Currey had formed in 1933; they stressed, moreover, the variety of opinions which were sought. The Club was:

> '(1) To bring together men who are interested in modern methods of government.
> (2) To provide a platform for leaders of Fascist and Corporate State thought. The club, however, will not formulate any policy of its own.
> (3) To enable those who are propagating Fascism to hear the views of those who, while sympathising with and students of twentieth-century political thought, are not themselves Fascists.'

Sir John Squire, the chairman, laid down the lines of policy at the first meeting. The club 'was not a Fascist organisation', but 'the members, who belonged to all political parties, were for the most part in sympathy with the Fascist movement. They believed that the existing democratic system of government in Britain must be changed, and although the change was unlikely to come about suddenly, as it had in Italy and Germany, they regarded it as inevitable.'[154]

In many of the members, various interests in Fascism naturally existed side by side. There are, however, three clear groups of those who attended the meetings which present themselves.

The first of these consisted of the 'Italophiles' from the *English Review* circle. Squire, Petrie, Miss Currey and Yeats-Brown were particularly prominent as speakers. Cecil Roberts was another keen follower of the Italian model. Yeats-Brown appears, too, to have been the main influence on a number of people who attended, including his old friend Colonel Norman Thwaites (later to become chairman). Fairfax-Lucy would also seem to belong to this group.

The second was the Mosley contingent. As well as the BUF party officials, who included Mosley himself, Forgan, Sir Donald and Lady Makgill, William Joyce and Raven Thomson, there was also Mosley's family circle, including his mother, and his late wife's two sisters Lady Ravensdale and Lady Alexandra Metcalfe (wife of 'Fruity', who was also a member). And there were other enthusiasts, including Sir George Duckworth-King, a Devonshire baronet who, in June, was to be observed wearing a black shirt at the Olympia meeting.

The third was a number of Conservative-minded people without other obvious affiliations. Lord Lloyd himself spoke to the Club in May (but only on condition that his speech was not reported). Other Conservatives who attended included Lord Erskine,[155] Lord William Scott,[156] and Lord Midleton,[157] who gave his London flat as the Club's headquarters. The January Club certainly attracted the Establishment. Wing-Commander Sir Louis Greig,[158] who was a regular attender, was a Gentleman Usher in Ordinary to the King. 'Fruity' Metcalfe was a close friend of the Prince of Wales. Lord Iddesleigh, Lord Francis Hill, Lord and Lady Russell of Liverpool, Sir Philip Magnus, Bt., Sir Thomas Roberts, Bt., Gen. the Hon. Charles G. Bruce (the hero of Everest), Colonel Ivan Guthrie of Guthrie, and many others show how wide the interest in Fascism spread (while the presence of Zionists amid this list shows how little, at this stage, it was felt that there was a necessary link with anti-Semitism).

In a club devoted to all forms of Fascism, mention of Germany was natural. But it was infrequent as a major subject of discussion. Commandant Mary Allen, 'the pioneer policewoman of the world', who was an enthusiastic speaker at a dinner in March, was one of the few people to take a strong interest particularly in that country, basically because of her experience there when

organising policewomen before the war, and also because of her recent interview with Hitler.[159] On another occasion a German visitor, Dr Galinsky, was asked by Sir John Squire to give an account of the Hitler movement (much in the same way as an American visitor was asked to speak on America). The main interest of the Club was Fascism in general. Indeed, the BUF members, particularly, tried to play down any connexion with Germany; the bid for acceptance for the BUF could have been harmed by association with Nazism. Thus we find Dr Forgan referring to 'unintentional misconceptions' about Fascism which stemmed from people imagining 'that what had happened in Germany under Nazism would necessarily happen here'.[160]

Other discussions by members of the January Club showed a similar worry at the fact that Fascism was being tarred with the German brush. In a public discussion held in April with Professor Harold Laski, both Yeats-Brown and Miss Currey continued, as usual, to stress Italy; but Miss Currey, significantly, without referring to Germany, brought up the question of anti-Semitism. 'Miss Muriel Currey', ran the report, 'declared that there was no suppression of the Jews in Italy. The Chief Rabbi was a Fascist, and was a strong supporter of Mussolini'.[161] Whether the knowledgeable liked it or not, to the uninitiated British public 'Fascism' was beginning to mean 'Nazism'. The problems caused by this were many; as we shall see.

The 'respectable' phase of the BUF, in early 1934, consisted of trying to show it to be a form of Conservatism, while playing down anything which might deter leading members of society from lending support. At first, the only real drawback to this policy was the reaction in certain sections of the BUF itself. After all, the movement set out to have a revolutionary policy. How did this equate with Conservatism?

For many Conservatives there was no problem. Colonel Thomas Moore, MP, for example, in the *Daily Mail* of 25 April, could write: 'Surely there cannot be any fundamental difference of outlook between the Blackshirts and their parents, the Conservatives?' He described the BUF as being 'largely derived from the Conservative Party'. Their instincts were the same: 'loyalty to the throne and love of country'.[162] On 2 May Rothermere was still referring to the BUF as standing for 'sound, commonsense Conservative doctrine'.[163] To certain Fascists this kind of view was anathema. C. P. Chenevix Trench had a typical reaction to Moore's article. He abhorred the idea that the BUF should become 'a sort of "ginger group" to the Tory Party', because 'our ideals and our policy are poles apart from the bourgeois-minded and reactionary Tory Party'. Any kind of co-operation would deprive them of 'any hope of converting Socialists and Communists, who provide our most valuable recruits'. It would 'lower our ideals and utterly destroy the revolutionary spirit which has made us the most active political force in the country'.[164]

The honeymoon was to break for other reasons, however. The Olympia meeting on 7 June brought home to many the nature of the BUF. Faced by organised disruption, the Fascist stewards resorted to extreme violence. In Skidelsky's words, 'The Olympia meeting … brought [the] phase of "respectable" Fascism to a close.'[165] Of course, there were a considerable number of people who chose to ignore the signs. In the House of Commons Debate on 14 June, a number of MPs defended either Mosley, or free speech, or both. Michael Beaumont, Conservative MP for Aylesbury (and a former member of the English Mistery), spoke as an 'avowed anti-Democrat' who, though not a Fascist, admired Fascism in other countries. It was untrue, he said, to describe the BUF as 'a gang of thugs'. There were a lot of 'respectable, reasonable and intelligent people' in the movement. H. K. Hales, Conservative MP for Hanley (and the original for Arnold Bennett's *The Card*), similarly felt that the Fascists contained 'some of the most cultured members of our society'.

Nevertheless, many people were frightened away, and German 'frightfulness' during the year did much to influence those who saw Nazism and Fascism as the same thing. The 'Conservative

connexion' became shaky, both because of Conservative uncertainties, and because Mosley began to see it as a dangerous restraint on the more radical views of many of his members. Though the party was trying to attract Conservatives and people of influence, its main activists were drawn from other classes, and from other political colours. Many were from the Left: John Beckett, W. J. Leaper, and Henry J. Gibbs, for example, had been members of the ILP. Others were young and revolutionary. There was a growing tide of anti-Semitism. There was also, in such people as William Joyce and Raven Thomson, a strong admiration for Nazi Germany.[166] Before long, Mosley would have to choose between his main supporters and the chimera of right-wing respectability. How he would have chosen, had all things been equal, nobody can know. But the aftermath of Olympia showed that Conservative support was the less reliable of the two. The defection of Rothermere clinched the matter.

In July, an exchange of letters between Mosley and Rothermere, printed in the *Daily Mail*, showed how their attitudes diverged. As Mosley put it, 'You … are a Conservative and would like to see a revived Conservative Party. You are in accord with many aspects of our policy, such as the strong maintenance of the British Empire, notably in India, and the creation of a British Air Force second to none in the world.' But there were important points on which they differed: the corporate state, the question of dictatorship, and the Jews. While the Blackshirts had given their pledge that no racial or religious persecution would occur under Fascism in Britain, no Jews could become members because (a) they had bitterly attacked the BUF, and (b) they were organised as an international movement. The BUF were not prepared to relax their attitude towards the Jews in view of the fact that in the last year 80 per cent of convictions for physical attacks on Fascists had been of Jews.[167]

Rothermere stated his main objections to the BUF. He was against the word 'Fascist', to start with; it could never be successful in this country. He could never support any movement with an anti-Semitic bias, any movement which had dictatorship as one of its objectives, or any movement which would substitute a 'corporate state' for parliamentary institutions. He had hoped that Mosley would ally himself with Conservative forces in a grim struggle with Socialism.[168]

Where Rothermere led, other Conservatives followed. The *Saturday Review* was at first taken aback; its political correspondent, in an article entitled 'Rothermere or Mosley?', declared himself to be half-way between the two, aware of the disadvantages of the BUF's anti-Semitic and corporatist policies, but aware also of the need for the enthusiasm to be found in that movement.[169] By mid-August, however, Lady Houston herself had waded into the fray, and in an article entitled 'Lord Rothermere is Right', declared that Rothermere's reasoning was *unassailable.* 'Sir Oswald is far short of being a Mussolini, and he is doing himself and his followers harm by attempting more than he can achieve. English people do not like the word Dictator,' she wrote.[170]

While those Conservatives who had been attracted to the BUF were becoming disillusioned, the same was true of those enthusiasts for the corporate state or for Mussolini who had, for a while, been prepared to come together with Mosley and his men. Many left the January Club, disturbed by the growing influence of Mosley within it. While remaining outside the BUF, they had been not unsympathetic towards some of its aspirations. The impression of a 'takeover' by Mosley was, however, not welcome to them, as the Club thereby became a political weapon for one group rather than a meeting-place of minds. Petrie and Squire were among the first to go.

Yeats-Brown is particularly interesting. In June he took Sir Evelyn Wrench and his wife to Olympia to hear Mosley.[171] Wrench was fully convinced of Yeats-Brown's commitment to a change in British institutions, but he noted that they both shared the same lack of enthusiasm for Mosley. 'Although the meeting was well organised', he wrote, 'I disliked the theatricality of it all.

I could not envisage anyone as devoid of humour as Mosley becoming a great national leader, able though he was. I think Yeats-Brown shared this point of view.'[172]

That Yeats-Brown did is shown by a letter he wrote that November, when his disillusionment was complete. He had been dragged by a lady friend to hear Mosley at the Albert Hall. Though they only heard the end of the speech, it was 'a ranting attack on the Jews'. Yeats-Brown told his companion, who was wildly enthusiastic about Mosley, that 'he should be left alone, and that I'm sick of him'. Yeats-Brown would no longer go to the January Club, which would probably collapse. 'Mosley is too vain to ever be any good, and not human enough.'[173]

Yeats-Brown's own attitude to the Jews was not favourable enough to make Mosley's subject-matter the cause of his disaffection. Clearly, Mosley's personality put him off, as it was to put off many others. Perhaps this may have caused some of the reactions from potential supporters after Olympia (rather than the violence in the corridors). A group of fairly impartial non-Fascist observers, at the Romney Street Group, discussing the meeting on 12 June, took the view that 'Mosley himself had cut a very poor figure the moment things went astray', and that 'he has not got the personality that would carry his movement to victory'.[174]

The year 1934, then, saw a temporary flirtation with Mosley's Blackshirts on the part of two groups of people: (a) a number of Conservatives, (b) a number of enthusiasts for the corporate state and for Italian Fascism. By the end of the year, many members of both groups had become aware of the shortcomings of Mosley's movement. Both groups, while retaining their original views, withdrew their support for, and their interest in, Mosley. June 1934 was the moment when Mosley ceased to be an important political figure. Many felt, like Stanley Baldwin, that 'Mosley won't come to any good, and we need not bother about him'.[175] Even in pro-Fascist circles there was to be, from now on, an incredible lack of interest in Mosley's activities.

Mosley himself was now to move in a new direction, and attempt to change his power-base. It was a move which was to gain him a great deal of support in certain areas of society, while nevertheless restricting him from achieving any possible return to the centre of the stage. This development, and its effects, are discussed in Chapter 3.

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It is fascinating to note how little those who, in 1933–4, reacted against the shortcomings of democracy and turned to dreams of Corporatism, Fascism or dictatorship, concerned themselves with Germany. The Nazis were at best one of many Fascist régimes, and at worst an embarrassment. It is in other circles that enthusiasms centred on Germany were to be found.

1 Christopher Hibbert, *Benito Mussolini*, London, 1962, p. 95.
2 A. J. P. Taylor, *English History 1914–1945*, London, 1967, p. 317.
3 Quoted in Hibbert, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
4 Note by Sir A. Chamberlain on Document C9899/1/22, quoted in: P. G. Edwards, 'The Foreign Office and Fascism, 1922–1924', *Journal of Contemporary History*, v. 2, p. 156.
5 Press Statement from Rome, 20 Jan. 1927, in *The Times*, 21 Jan. 1927.
6 T. S. Eliot, *The Criterion*, July 1929.
7 See Chapter 3 and later sections of this chapter.
8 J. S. Barnes, *Half a Life Left*, London, 1937, p. 12.
9 Ibid.
10 Letter from Monsignor A. Gilbey, 19 Sept. 1976.
11 Barnes, *Half a Life Left*, p. 16.
12 See correspondence of Charles Benoist, *Bibliothèque de l'Institut*.
13 For much of my information on Goad I am indebted to Mr Ernle Money, his godson.
14 Goad himself was too retiring to do much public speaking.

15 John Evelyn Wrench, *Francis Yeats-Brown, 1886–1944*, London, 1948, pp. 120–1.
16 Barnes, *Half a Life Left*, p. 324. Note, however, that neither Chesterton nor Belloc was as enthusiastic about Fascism as Barnes.
17 H. Goad and M. Currey, *The Working of a Corporate State*, London, 1933, p. 115.
18 *Everyman*, 10 Nov. 1933.
19 *Everyman*, 6 Oct. 1933.
20 Goad and Currey, op. cit., p. 109.
21 Barnes, *Half a Life Left*, p. 290.
22 *Italy: A Companion to Italian Studies*, edited by Edmund Gardner, London, 1934, p. vii.
23 Walter Starkie, *The Waveless Plain*, London, 1938, p. 11.
24 Walter Starkie, 'Whither is Ireland Heading – Is it Fascism? Thoughts on the Irish Free State', in *A Survey of Fascism* (CINEF Year Book, London, 1928).
25 Starkie, *The Waveless Plain*, pp. 408–9.
26 Letter from G. B. Shaw to Frederich Adler, Oct. 2, 1927, in *Bernard Shaw And Fascism* [1927].
27 G. B. Shaw, 'Letter to a Friend, Feb. 7, 1927', in *Bernard Shaw and Fascism* [1927].
28 Ibid.
29 G. B. Shaw: Letter to Frederich Adler, 2 Oct. 1927, in *Bernard Shaw and Fascism* [1927].
30 Ibid.
31 *British-Italian Bulletin*, 30 May 1936.
32 Report by the Italian Ambassador, Grandi; see Daniel Waley, *British Public Opinion and the Abyssinian War*, London, 1975, pp. 118–19.
33 Sir Charles Petrie, *Chapters of Life*, London, 1950, p. 129.
34 Ibid., p. 130.
35 Sir Charles Petrie, *Lords of the Inland Sea*, London, 1937, p. x.
36 Ibid., p. 46.
37 Douglas Jerrold, *Georgian Adventure*, London, 1937, pp. 313–14.
38 Ibid., p. 315.
39 Jerrold, *Georgian Adventure*, p. 332.
40 Jerrold, 'The Corporate State in England', *Everyman*, 13 Oct. 1933.
41 Douglas Jerrold, *They That Take the Sword*, London, 1936, p. 152.
42 Patrick Howarth, *Squire, 'most generous of men'*, London, 1963, p. 247.
43 Sir John Squire, 'Here and There', *Everyman*, 27 Oct. 1933.
44 *Saturday Review*, 3 Feb. 1934, facing p. 126.
45 'Eve in Italy', *Saturday Review*, 10 Feb. 1934, pp. 146–7.
46 J. Wentworth Day, *Lady Houston, DBE: The Woman who Won the War*, London, 1958, p. 21.
47 H. Warner Allen, 'Mussolini – The Maker of Italy', *Saturday Review*, 6 July 1935, p. 845.
48 A. J. P. Taylor, *English History 1914–1945*, London, 1967, p. 284.
49 Chapter 8, pp. 151–84 of *The History of Government*, London, 1929.
50 Ibid., p. 151.
51 Ibid., p. 152.
52 Claud Sutton, *Farewell to Rousseau*, London, 1936, p. 218. Sutton was a tutor at St Peter's Hall, Oxford.
53 Lord Raglan, *If I were Dictator*, London, 1934, pp. 4–5.
54 *Punch*, 25 March 1931.
55 See *Whitehall Gazette*, March 1931.
56 Articles in *Whitehall Gazette*, January and April 1931, reprinted in Sir Warden Chilcott, *Political Salvation 1930-1932*, London, 1932.
57 The Earl of Portsmouth, *A Knot of Roots*, p. 119.
58 *The Reith Diaries*, edited by Charles Stuart, London 1975, p. 57,
59 See, especially, Robert Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley*, London, 1975.
60 Mosley, quoted in Bruce Lockhart, *Diary*, 20 May 1930 (1, 121).
61 Ibid., 25 Sept. 1930 (1, 125).
62 See, e.g., Winston Churchill's 1930 Romanes Lecture, Harold Nicolson's *Diary* for 30 Nov. 1930, *etc.*
63 Harold Nicolson, *Diary*, 6 Nov. 1930.
64 Ibid., 30 Nov. 1930.
65 Harold Nicolson, *Diary*, 21 July 1931.
66 Bruce Lockhart, *Diary*, 27 Aug. 1931.
67 Bruce Lockhart, *Diary*, 13 Feb. 1931.
68 Harold Nicolson, *Diary*, 28 May 1931.

69 Bruce Lockhart, *Diary,* 24 July 1931.
70 Harold Nicolson, *Diary,* 23 July 1931.
71 Bruce Lockhart, *Diary,* 28 May 1931.
72 See Harold Nicolson, *Diary,* 4 Sept. 1931.
73 Harold Nicolson, *Diary,* 24 July 1931.
74 Ibid., 10 June 1931.
75 Bruce Lockhart, *Diary,* 27 Aug. 1931.
76 Harold Nicolson, *Diary,* 22 Sept. 1931.
77 Ibid., 26 Aug. 1931.
78 Ibid., 23 Sept. 1931.
79 Ibid., 1 Oct. 1931.
80 Ibid., 26 Aug. 1931.
81 Ibid., 30 Oct. 1931.
82 Ibid., 24 Nov. 1931.
83 Ibid., 24 Nov. 1931.
84 Ibid., 11 Dec. 1931.
85 Ibid., 5 Jan. 1932.
86 Ibid., 5 Jan. 1932.
87 Ibid., 7 Jan. 1932.
88 Ibid., 6 Jan. 1932.
89 Ibid., 18 Jan. 1932.
90 Ibid., 30 Jan. 1932.
91 We shall see this, from the other side, in Chapter 3.
92 Harold Nicolson, *Diary,* 19 April 1932.
93 Ibid., 15 March 1932.
94 Letter from Sir Oswald Mosley to Harold Nicolson, 4 Sept. 1931 (in Nicolson, *Diary and Letters,* 1, 89).
95 Bruce Lockhart, *Diary,* 29 Sept. 1932.
96 Skidelsky, op. cit., p. 297.
97 See Nicolson, *Diary,* Jan. 1932.
98 Bruce Lockhart, *Diary,* 8 June 1934.
99 See p. 53.
100 Dr Robert Forgan, reported in *Fascist Week,* 30 March–5 April, 1934.
101 See, e.g., Richard Griffiths, *Marshal Pétain,* London, 1970, pp. 172–4.
102 *The Waveless Plain,* London, 1938.
103 Numerous articles.
104 J. S. Barnes, *Half a Life Left,* London, 1937, p. 317.
105 Douglas Jerrold, 'Current Comments', *English Review,* July 1933.
106 Douglas Jerrold, 'Current Comments', *English Review,* Sept. 1933.
107 Douglas Jerrold, 'Current Comments', *English Review,* March 1935.
108 *The Times,* 23 July 1964.
109 Douglas Jerrold, 'Current Comments', *English Review,* April 1933.
110 Sir Charles Petrie, 'Fascism and the Nazis', *Saturday Review,* 20 May 1933·
111 'Foreign Affairs', *English Review,* June 1933.
112 'The German Threat to Austria', *Saturday Review,* 1 July 1933.
113 'Foreign Affairs', *English Review,* Aug. 1934.
114 'Foreign Affairs', *English Review,* Sept. 1934.
115 'The Rome Agreement', *Nineteenth Century and After,* Feb. 1935.
116 *E.g. Saturday Review,* 1 April 1933.
117 *Saturday Review,* 20 May 1933.
118 *E.g.* reviews of Mowrer's *Germany puts back the clock* (1 April 1933), W. H. Dawson's *Germany under the Treaty* (3 June 1933).
119 Lady Houston, letter to the *Saturday Review,* 21 April 1934.
120 *Saturday Review,* 7 July 1934.
121 Quoted in Yeats-Brown, *European Jungle,* London, 1939.
122 F. Yeats-Brown, 'Hitler's Faith' (review of *My Struggle,* by Adolf Hitler), *Everyman,* 13 Oct. 1933.
123 Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley*, p. 353.
124 See Harold Nicolson, *Diary,* 8 May 1933.

125 Harold Nicolson, *Diary,* 11 Oct. 1933.
126 Bruce Lockhart, *Diary,* 3 Oct. 1933.
127 See Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler,* Cambridge, 1975, pp. 117 and 455.
128 Sir Henry Fairfax-Lucy, 3rd Bt., of Charlecote Park, Warwickshire and Maxton, St Boswells, Roxburghshire, b. 1870. On Warwickshire and Roxburghshire County Councils. Conservative candidate on two occasions.
129 Sir Henry Fairfax-Lucy, 'The Breakaway from Parliamentary Government', *Saturday Review,* 8 April 1933.
130 Quoted in Jerrold, *Georgian Adventure*, p. 340.
131 Notes for *Everyman*, quoted in Wrench, *Francis Yeats-Brown, 1886–1944,* London, 1948, pp. 120–1.
132 Editorial, *Everyman*, 6 Oct. 1933.
133 Ibid.
134 'Current Comments', *English Review,* Nov. 1933.
135 Jerrold, 'The Corporate State in England', *Everyman*, 13 Oct. 1933.
136 Ibid.
137 b. 1893. Catholic convert, 'Beachcomber' of the *Daily Express* from 1924 onwards.
138 J. B. Morton, 'Sleeping England', *Everyman*, 3 Nov. 1933.
139 Douglas Jerrold, *Georgian Adventure*, London, 1937, p. 342.
140 Ibid., p. 344.
141 Lord Halifax, *Fulness of Days*, London, 1957, p. 85.
142 Jerrold, op. cit., p. 343.
143 'Current Comments', *English Review,* Dec. 1933.
144 Cecil Roberts, *Sunshine and Shadow,* p. 111.
145 Cecil Roberts, *And so to America*, London, 1946, p. 21.
146 Cecil Roberts, *Sunshine and Shadow,* p. 112.
147 *Fascist Week,* 4–10 May 1934.
148 See Philip Gibbs, *European Journey,* London, 1934, pp. 182–254.
149 Colin Cross, *The Fascists in Britain*, London, 1961, pp. 100–1.
150 Robert Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley*, London, 1975, p. 322.
151 *Daily Mail*, 15 Jan. 1934.
152 *Saturday Review,* 10 Feb. 1934.
153 Robert Benewick, *The Fascist Movement in Britain*, London, 1972, p. 94.
154 Howarth, op. cit., p. 247.
155 b. 1895. Eldest son of 12th Earl of Mar. Unionist MP for Weston-super-Mare. Assistant Government Whip.
156 b. 1896. 2nd son of 7th Duke of Buccleuch. Brother of 8th Duke, q.v. Unionist MP for Roxburgh and Selkirk from 1935.
157 b. 1856. Secretary of State for War, 1900–3. Sec. of State for India, 1903–5, father-in-law of Sir Ronald Graham, British Ambassador to Italy.
158 b. 1880. Comptroller to the Duke of York, 1920–3.
159 Hitler had received her in January.
160 Report in *Fascist Week*, 30 March–5 April 1934.
161 Report in *Fascist Week*, 27 April–3 May 1934.
162 *Daily Mail*, 25 April 1934.
163 *Daily Mail*, 2 May 1934.
164 C. P. Chenevix Trench, letter to *Fascist Week,* 4–10 May 1934.
165 Skidelsky, op. cit.
166 From early 1933 onwards, certain elements within the BUF had, despite official uncertainty on the matter, shown great enthusiasm for the Nazi régime, as opposed to other Fascist manifestations. The BUF delegation for the Nuremberg rally in 1933, for example, included Joyce, Raven Thomson, and Unity Mitford.
167 Letter, Mosley to Rothermere, 12 July 1934 (printed in *Daily Mail* 19 July 1934).
168 Letter, Rothermere to Mosley, 14 July 1934 (quoted in *Daily Mail*, 19 July 1934).
169 'Rothermere or Mosley?' by Kim, *Saturday Review,* 28 July 1934.
170 'Lord Rothermere is Right', by Lady Houston, DBE, *Saturday Review,* 11 Aug. 1934.
171 Wrench, op. cit., p. 176.
172 Wrench, op. cit., p. 176.
173 Yeats-Brown, letter to Rosalind Constable, 1 Nov. 1934 (quoted in Wrench, op. cit., pp. 183–4).
174 Tom Jones, Diary, 12 June 1934 (*Diary with Letters,* p. 131). Those present included Tom Jones, Walter Elliot and his wife, Joseph Thorp and J. J. Mallon.
175 Tom Jones, Diary, 12 June 1934 (*Diary with Letters*, p. 130).

[2]

The Jewish Question

IT WOULD be ludicrous to suggest that antiSemitism has played no part in British life. It has always done so, and it has even, at times, been a factor in British politics. It would nevertheless be unrealistic to suggest that it ever reached the scale of continental antiSemitism; public feeling, except in certain restricted circles, was never virulent enough, nor did the British political situation provide the uncertainty which, in the case of continental régimes such as the French Third Republic, enabled antiSemitism to be exploited as a major political weapon.

Forms of antiSemitism in Great Britain

One of the main strands of British antiSemitism, from the turn of the century onwards, was to be found in the group connected with Hilaire Belloc, G. K. Chesterton and Cecil Chesterton, and had strong connexions with the antiSemitic tendencies of the French Right of the pre-war period. It was a Catholic movement, nostalgic for an imaginary time when the Church had been central to life, when all had been stable, ordered, hierarchical and traditional, and when every man had known his duties as well as his rights. This idyll had, in their view, been destroyed by the industrial revolution, which was the cause of all social evil, including the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few powerful capitalists. The answer was a return to medieval concepts of property, and a form of guild system: these policies were the mainstay of Distributism, as the movement was called. It appears to have owed a certain amount to the theories of Le Play.[1]

In this nexus of ideas, the hatred of the capitalist, and of the industrial revolution, led, as in the case of French writers like Drumont, to a dislike of the Jews who seemed to stand for these things. Belloc, in particular, saw the Jews as perpetually extending their power: 'The Jews are gaining control and we will not be controlled by them.'[2] Again, the connexion with the fears of the French Right is obvious.

A far more prevalent antiSemitic fear, after the First World War and the Russian Revolution, was the belief in an international Jewish conspiracy, devoted to the destruction of the western world. The basis for this belief was largely the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion,* a spurious document produced in France under the Second Empire, which had first appeared in print in Russia in 1903.[3] The claim was that the document (a clumsy conglomeration of material from other sources) had been stolen from the Zionist headquarters in Paris. It was supposed to contain the instructions of the Jewish 'Elders' to the Jewish people; the Elders had been appointed, as a secret committee, by King Solomon, and had remained in existence from that day to this, co-opting new members to continue the line. The *Protocols* contained plans for the complete disruption of Christian civilisation, on the ruins of which could be formed a new world state to be ruled by Jews and freemasons. The techniques were described in great detail.

The Bolshevist Revolution in November 1917 seemed, to many, to prove the *Protocols* true. Because a number of Jews (e.g. Trotsky and Zinoviev) were prominent in the Bolshevik movement, the idea of a Jewish Bolshevik conspiracy gained wide acceptance in the western

world. The Revolution seemed one more step in the plan. As a result of this, the *Protocols* were soon translated into the other European languages. A German translation appeared in 1919, and an English one in 1920 (translated by Victor Marsden, former correspondent of the *Morning Post* in St Petersburg).

Though the *Protocols* were revealed to be a forgery, in *The Times*[4] in 1921, the belief in a 'Judaeo-Masonic plot' was to permeate certain areas of political thought in Great Britain in the twenties and thirties. As Maurice Cowling has shown, it affected a section of the Conservative Party in the early twenties, a Die Hard group which was 'more interested in the "Protocols" of the Elders of Zion … than in any Protocols connected with the League of Nations'.[5] The main figures involved were the Duke of Northumberland (president of the Conservative National Union in 1923), Leo Maxse (editor of the *National Review*), H. A. Gwynne (editor of the *Morning Post*) and Lord Sydenham of Combe (ex-Governor of Madras and ex-Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence). Under their influence the *Morning Post*, the *National Review* and *The Patriot* (a journal founded by Northumberland in 1922) devoted considerable space to the Judaeo-Bolshevik plot. Anything could be blamed on it, from the Irish situation to the appointment of Lewis Namier to an Oxford Fellowship. The purpose of it was 'the abolition of all law, order, morality and religion throughout the world'.[6]

Meanwhile, on a very different level, the influence of the *Protocols* was being disseminated through a series of publications, many of them the product of a small group called 'The Britons', founded in London in 1919 by H. H. Beamish, the 'well-known anti-Jewish pioneer'.[7] Beamish was an eccentric figure, who had settled in South Africa after the Boer War, but left there when he realised how much Jewish control there was over that country. He came to Britain and founded the Britons. Under the imprint of The Britons Publishing Co., this group took over the publication of the *Protocols* from Eyre and Spottiswoode in 1922. Other works to be published by them included Lord Sydenham of Combe's *The Jewish World Problem* (1921), *The Jews' Who's Who* (edited by H. H. Beamish), *Britain under the Heel of the Jew* (edited by Dr J. H. Clarke), *Why are the Jews Hated? etc.*

Meanwhile *The Patriot* was also producing a series of pamphlets and leaflets with titles such as *The World Revolution, The Jewish Domination, The First Jewish Bid for World Power, The Nameless Beast, etc.*

Among the prominent members of the Britons was Arthur Kitson, one of the strangest figures thrown up by the movement for monetary reform. Born in 1859, he had spent most of his life campaigning for a completely new monetary system.[8] Like Major Douglas of Social Credit fame, he spiced his economic views with antiSemitism. His main arguments against the gold standard were based on the *Protocols*, which showed 'the debt-slavery which the use of gold for the basis of money inflicts'. The Jews could produce economic crises for the Gentiles 'by no other means than the withdrawal of money from circulation'.[9]

Two of the most popular writers on antiSemitic subjects at this time (if the numbers of editions of their works, and the extent to which they are mentioned, is a means of assessment) were Mrs Nesta Webster and Lt.-Col. A. H. Lane.

Mrs Webster considered herself to be something of a historian. Her book *The French Revolution: a Study in Democracy* (Constable, 1919) had developed a wide-ranging 'conspiracy theory' of history. The bad reception of this book by historians had proved to her that the conspiracy was still alive, 'hence the attempt to boycott my books in those quarters where the plan of world revolution was secretly entertained and where it was realized that any disclosures on its *modus operandi* and its ultimate purpose might lead to its defeat … In revealing the truth about that tragic epoch in what I imagined to be merely an academic work of history I had entered the

lists against terrific living forces of which I had not guessed the existence.'[10]

In a series of books, articles and speeches Mrs Webster preached the new gospel. It was only gradually, however, that the specifically Jewish nature of the conspiracy emerged. Freemasonry at first seemed the main enemy. Bolshevism in Russia was largely German and Jewish, and 'we cannot wonder that to many people the whole world revolution seems to be a Jewish conspiracy'.[11] But it could not entirely be called Jewish, for it was also largely German, the whole conspiracy 'being worked by the continuation of the German Secret Society of the Illuminati'.[12] The Protocols were Masonic, above all: 'they are the revised programme of illuminized Freemasonry formulated by a Jewish lodge of the Order'.[13] Though the influence of the Jews could be traced *throughout* the world conspiracy, Germany was the main enemy, and the Jewish agitator was 'the tsetse fly carrying the poison germ of Bolshevism from the breeding-ground of Germany'.[14] AntiSemitism in Germany was merely a strategic manoeuvre, for 'Germany will not relinquish her Jews as long as they can help her towards the attainment of her dream of world-power'.[15]

By the mid-twenties, however, her position had changed. Though the Germans and Jews were still seen as allies, pan-Germanism no longer seemed the major partner in the alliance; it was dominated by 'a power far older, that seeks to destroy all national spirit, all ordered government in every country, Germany included'.[16] This was Jewish power.

Nevertheless, until 1933 Mrs Webster continued to stress the 'German-Jewish' influence on Bolshevism, and on world revolution. This was a view shared by many other British antiSemites, particularly Leo Maxse, for whom Germany had seemed the spiritual home of international Jewry. The mingling of anti-Germanism and antiSemitism, so common in the twenties, was to be of particular interest at the time of the advent of the Nazis.

Lt.-Col. A. H. Lane's *The Alien Menace* struck a somewhat different antiSemitic chord. Its theme was the danger of Jewish immigration, of the 'low types' involved, and of alien financiers. The first edition came out in 1928, and was closely followed by another, in 1929, with a violently anti-alien preface by Lord Sydenham of Combe. There was then a pause, but there were three new editions in 1932, 1933 and 1934, which made of it the Bible of all those of xenophobic tendencies in the thirties.

References to Mrs Webster's books, as to Colonel Lane's, recur throughout the inter-war years.[17] While the kind of public which read these works, as well as the products of the 'Britons', may well be regarded as a lunatic fringe, it appears to have been quite a large fringe, as the number of editions testifies. The important thing, for our purposes, is that through *The Patriot*, the *Morning Post*, the *National Review* and other publications, the idea of a Jewish plot was, in this period, kept before the minds of many unsuspecting readers.

And, of course, some of this propaganda spilled over into the light literature of the period, where it could have an even more insidious effect. The novelist F. Britten Austin, for example, depicting a wild revolutionary mob, showed 'amid all these excited figures … the cold and calculating agent of the Power that had set the whole thing off'. This 'undersized, middle-aged, Semitic-looking man', with a 'thin sallow high-cheekboned face contracting to an ugly mouth under his big nose', and who, when he smiled, 'showed his yellow teeth in a rictus under his large nose' as he 'rubbed his claw-like hands', was depicted as calmly directing the mob to his own ends.[18]

Austin is, of course, an extreme. But other popular novelists give, in a more subdued way, the same picture of dark, destructive forces at work, engineering wars and chaos for no other end than to destroy society; and these forces tended to have Jews as their main representatives. 'Sapper's' Bulldog Drummond stories are typical; one such figure is described as follows:

> the new-comer wore a heavy fur coat, though the evening was warm. A silk scarf was wrapped round his neck; an opera hat was on his head. His face was swarthy; his dark eyes gleamed with vitality. And his hooked nose proclaimed his race.[19]

It would be unwise to exaggerate the force of antiSemitism in Great Britain in this period. The number of people who were seriously swayed by fears of a 'Judaeo-Masonic plot' was a very small percentage of the population. Alongside it there was a great deal of 'parlour antiSemitism' of the type which led to social ostracism of various kinds, and to the kind of distaste for things Jewish which was epitomised by T. S. Eliot's poem *Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar* (1920):

> But this or such was Bleistein's way:
> A saggy bending of the knees
> And elbows, with the palms turned out,
> Chicago Semite Viennese.[20]

But if, to some, 'money in furs'[21] seemed to be undermining civilised society, and to others, lower down the social scale, an alien invasion seemed to be threatening their livelihood, British antiSemitism only rarely achieved the violence of its continental counterparts. The Nazi measures in Germany shocked many people who were otherwise fairly antiSemitic.

British AntiSemites and the Nazis

The emergence of the Nazi régime, and of its specifically antiSemitic policies, nonplussed many of those British antiSemites who were also violently anti-German.

The Patriot is typical of that section of British opinion which was strongly imperialistic (much of its contents was, in the early thirties, concerned with India), antiSemitic, anti-masonic, and anti-pacifist. Its first reactions to the new régime were wary. Hitler, 'the ex-Austrian corporal', had risen to power mainly owing to 'his oratorical appeal to the mob electorate'. Nothing was really known of his policies; his views appeared to be strongly anti-capitalistic and antiSemitic, but the first of these would probably be counteracted by his Nationalist colleagues, and the second were unlikely to be realised, because 'the big Jews are strongly entrenched in German finance and industry, and the hunting of small fry, which the Nazis have practised, is of little use'.[22] On the other hand, German national claims were dangerous, and the new propaganda, which made out that 'for the last thirty years or so Germany has been more sinned against than sinning', was pernicious, in that Germany 'might have the sense to recognise that she was lucky at the Treaty of Versailles to be left with East Prussia at all'.[23] Hitler's antiSemitic tone, like his call to the working man, had been 'a matter of tactics, successfully directed to the sweeping-up of a majority of voters for a party in which the overriding sentiment is *Deutschland über alles*'.[24]

At the same time *The Patriot* noted that, despite the unreality of Hitler's antiSemitism, the Jews believed the threats, and, 'as organised Jewry is ever on the watch for signs of danger to the race, an intense propaganda has been started against Germany by means of the vast publicity at command in the Press of all countries'. There was a 'wonderful organisation of Jewish power in all lands for the protection of racial interests'. As the Dreyfus Affair had shown, 'vast ramifications existed for working up popular excitement in any desired direction'.[25]

By May 1933 *The Patriot* was prepared to admit that Hitler's antiSemitism was real. He had done 'an immense work for Germany' by limiting the Jewish influence 'which had become

excessive and injurious'. This had naturally caused 'hardships for some of the alien race', though these sufferings had been 'greatly exaggerated in the Press of the world'. Nevertheless, *The Patriot* still stuck to its guns about Germany. Hitler was the voice of the 'pan-Germans', whose ideals were 'an excessive form of patriotism and racialism, not appealing to British sympathy, or conducive to British interests'. He had brought about a unified Germany again, 'a Germany determined to have a voice in world affairs once more, a Germany quite unrepentant for her action in bringing about the world war'.[26] The dangers were German rearmament, and her claim to colonies.[27] The French were right to be sceptical about Germany's pacific utterances.[28]

This was to remain *The Patriot's* line right up to 1936. The Roehm purge proved, for example, that 'German frightfulness is not a thing of the past', and that 'as there are those in power in Germany prepared to use all the old frightfulness on their own subjects, there can be no certainty that those methods will not be employed on other nations when conditions may seem favourable'. Germany could not be trusted any more than Soviet Russia.[29] Dollfuss's murder was blamed entirely on the Nazis.[30] By 1935 *The Patriot* was highly concerned about Germany's 'tearing up of all the essential clauses of the Treaty of Versailles',[31] and was still clamouring for rearmament.

From 1935 onwards, however, as the BUF's antiSemitic attitudes came to the fore, *The Patriot* began strongly to support Mosley's movement, which was 'innocent of any serious sympathy with the Nazis',[32] and 'had nothing in common as policy' with them except intense patriotism.[33] It was not until 1936 that *The Patriot*, in common with many other right-wing areas of thought, gave signs of approval of the Nazi régime.

If *The Patriot* at first found its anti-Germanism outweighing its antiSemitism, the same was not true of Mrs Nesta Webster, who wrote in its pages. We have already seen how her emphasis, in relation to a worldwide German-Jewish plot, had shifted in the twenties from 'German' to 'Jewish'. Now, faced by a government of Germany which was persecuting the Jews, she came out strongly in its favour. She waxed sarcastic about the British press, which, until January 1933, had been anti-French and pro-German, and which had now changed its tune. Why had it done so? Because 'Germany has dared to "discriminate" against the Jews'. Hitler had set out to grapple with the Jewish problem, and 'those of us in England who have been subjected for years to a real boycott, organised by Jews … can hardly be expected to shed tears over this turning of the tables'. While it had been difficult in the past 'to distinguish between German and Jewish influences in the background of the revolutionary movement', it was now clear that Germany was cleansing herself of the Jewish influence.[34]

Mrs Webster's views were to remain the same throughout the thirties, until the Nazi–Soviet Pact of 1939 destroyed her illusions. England, she wrote in 1938, was no longer controlled by Britons. 'Ever since the war the Jewish power has been growing … It was this which up to 1933 tried to turn us against France and since then against Germany … As long as the Jews do not hold Germany they can never realise their final aim – *world domination.* Therefore, Hitler must be overthrown and the Jewish power restored. It is idle to say that this vast ambition has been falsely attributed to the Jewish race. The dream of a Messianic era when they shall rule the world runs all through their "sacred" writings.'[35]

Most people of violently antiSemitic views appear to have welcomed the advent of the Nazis to power. A passage from John Wolf's *Nazi Germany* (1934) is typical of the style:

> Tended and preserved by ancient religious rites for thousands of years, Jewish blood and Jewish mentality has during the course of centuries brought destructive poisons of all kinds to work among other nations of which they in the end die. What did Russia die of? … Marxism. And what is Marxism? The undeniable produce of the Jewish intellect. Whose brains were

> responsible for the creed of Marxism? Marx and Engels. And who were Marx and Engels? Jews! Who were Lenin and Trotsky who paved the way for the great upheaval in Russia? Jews! Who are today the unchallenged masters of the Kremlin at Moscow? Jews! Who destroyed the conception of faith and truth in the world of Germanic culture? The Jew! Who poisoned the youthful mind of all countries with books and pictures of sexual trash? The Jew! And so one could continue. Everywhere the Jew is busy with his work of destruction. And why does the Jew destroy and disintegrate European culture? Because he is not able to do anything else. Following a sinister impulse of the blood, he strives after world domination and the means of achieving this is the destruction of the so-called Christian European culture.[36]

Hitler's antiSemitism, said Wolf, was based on these facts. 'It is the call of blood against blood, the northern Germanic race against the Jewish oriental … A time will come when the world will recognise this fact and express its gratitude to Hitler for having checked the downfall of the Western lands.'[37]

Some of the most extreme views on this question were printed in the editorials of the flying magazine *The Aeroplane*, whose editor was C. G. Grey.[38] The racial views expounded by Grey make even Rosenberg's pale into insignificance.

Germany, for Grey, was 'the first line of defence against Eastern barbarism'. If the British 'only had some of the racial pride and the spirit of nationalism and the aggressive spirit which moves Germany today' they would be much better off.[39] Germany and Great Britain were 'the two white nations'.[40]

German persecution, said Grey, was not directed against the 'Israelitish Jews as we know them, for they have done much good work in Germany as in England'. Such Jews could prove themselves to be good citizens of their adopted nation. Anti-Jewish agitation in Germany, which had 'real and wise hatred behind it', was against 'the Tartar Jews from Russia and Poland – that is to say, the Khazar Jews (the Ashkenazim), who are purely Japhetic and went Jew by order in the time of Charlemagne'.[41] These were the people who had caused the Russian Revolution.

Grey claimed to be 'pro-Semitic' but 'anti-Japhetic'. Japhetic Jews were easily recognised: 'you may walk down the Mile End Road any day you like, but preferably on a Saturday, and pick out the Ashkenazim by their broad, flat noses, their coarse lips, their high cheekbones, their turned-down upper eyelids, and – if you can get a look at it – the great width of their heads between the ears'.[42] It was by realising how many Welsh miners fitted this description that Grey had found the secret behind the Bolshevist influence in the Welsh mining valleys:

> Fifteen years ago or thereabouts I happened to meet one of the most Communistic of the Welsh Miners' leaders. He had a Welsh name and spoke with a most pronounced Welsh accent, but he was one of the finest specimens of Tartar Jew I have ever seen in my life. And you will find hundreds of them in the Welsh coalfields … They are the people who stir up Bolshevism among the miners. If we had a Government which would do scientifically on a proper ethnological basis what Adolf Hitler is doing rather clumsily and unscientifically in Germany, we should practically stamp Communism out of this country without ever touching a white man, or a Semitic Jew.[43]

It was important, in Grey's view, for Hitler and 'my friend Capt. von Goering' to make it clear to the world that their anti-Jewish campaign was anti-Japhetic and not antiSemitic. However, they might have difficulty in making this known outside Germany, 'because many Ashkenazim have made money, and are so mixed up with the Sephardim that Jewish influence with the Press might

block the spread of such news'.[44]

The claim that Jewish interests affected newspaper reports on Germany was common in such writings. 'When the Nazi worm turned, and the services of many Jews were dispensed with, Jewry throughout the world rose in arms and through the medium of the press here, and public meetings in London and the provinces, denounced the German Government in violent terms',[45] wrote G. E. O. Knight, the literary editor of *Books and Authors*, in 1933. By the fifteenth edition of his book *In Defence of Germany*, in 1934, he had added the words: 'International Jewry, at the moment, would seem to be destroying the best in British journalism, and that in a cause that is both worthless and futile. If British journalism is to sink to the level of the gutter, the fault will certainly be found at the door of the Jews'.[46] In the same year, he was claiming in another work that 'the press of England is controlled by Jews', and that 'the *Daily Herald*, for example, is one of the most enthusiastic organs of Jewish culture and ideals – it literally exudes Judaism'.[47] A. C. Maclaren, writing to *Anglo-German News and Views*, extended the accusation to publishers and reviewers: 'One has grown accustomed to the wilful lying of the British Press in all things German, but behind it all the intelligent reader detects the evil hand of the Jews, who virtually control the newspapers of London and the provinces. During the last few weeks, several anti-German books have been published, written in the main by Jews. Many have flopped rather badly, since the majority partake of the nature of propaganda. The reviews, almost without exception, are favourable to the authors and their work. Germany … must either return to her former chaotic state or adopt Communism. Not until then will the Jews be satisfied. For it is Jewry that speaks, it is Jewry that demands to control the destiny of Germany, it is Jewry that is to foist her culture on seventy millions of non-Jews … It is not *British* propaganda; if the British had their way, and knew the truth of things, there are few people in this country who would not expose the plot and send the Jews about their business.'[48]

As Gordon Bolitho put it: 'The Jews are brilliant propagandists … The Jews wail more loudly than any other oppressed people. So we hear their voices first.'[49]

Excuses for Nazi antiSemitism: (I) Germany a special case

Some antiSemites, knowing the British public's aversion to persecution, attempted to play down and explain Germany's methods by various excuses. On the other hand, enthusiasts for the Nazi régime who had no trace of antiSemitism often tried to play down the same excesses with the same excuses. It will become clear, from the arguments in each case we take, to which category the speaker belongs.

As early as 1931, in his book *Hitler*, Wyndham Lewis had laid the foundations for the arguments. AntiSemitism, which was 'calculated in Anglo-Saxon countries to prejudice people at the outset against the movement', was a Middle European phenomenon. 'In Mitteleuropa there *Juden* and *Nichtjuden*, here that is not the case.'[50] Though antiSemitism might seem a 'harsh intolerance' to the Anglo-Saxon, he should take into account the situation of the Jewish community in Central Europe. AntiSemitism was a powerful 'Agitationsmittel', but in Lewis's view Hitler and his men were *not* 'making a cynical use of this handy weapon of race-antagonism for their own ends'.[51] While there were no *real* Jews in England, in Central Europe one still saw the 'Jew' of stage-tradition; and the German 'identified the Jew with everything that is inimical to the society to which he belongs'.[52]

Lewis, who regarded the whole thing as a 'racial red-herring', exhorted his Anglo-Saxon compatriots thus: 'do not allow these difficult matters to sway you too much (though decidedly

warning this crude Teuton to be civil, when in your company). But still allow a little *Blutsgefühl* to have its way (a blood-feeling towards this other mind and body like your own) – in favour of this brave and very unhappy impoverished kinsman. Do not allow a mere bagatelle of a *Judenfrage* to stand in the way of that!'[53]

One view was that the Jews had pretty well 'taken over' Germany before the advent of the Nazis. 'The Jews in the Reich overran every Government Department, and enjoyed the highest privileges in every profession and calling', wrote Knight. 'Nearly every German war profiteer was a Jew.'[54] Now, while it was not to be denied that 'the Jews are a very clever and amiable people, that they have contributed very materially to science, literature, art and music', it was unreasonable that 'one per cent of the population of Germany should impose their rule and culture – however eminent that culture may be – on more than sixty million native-born Germans'. Anyone who objected should ask himself 'whether a Government of Jews in the House of Commons would be tolerated in this country'.[55]

The picture given of pre-Hitler Germany by some writers was explanation enough for antiSemitic measures. 'With Socialists in power, with Jews honeycombing the civil service and educational institutions, the whole of Germany lay quivering for a leader', wrote General MacMunn.[56] 'We may deplore the concomitants of the resurrection … yet we should realise that the situation was so bad that there was no room to allow any conscientious objectors, no room to be human to Jews whose ideas fought the Nationalism that alone could save, or to Communists imbued with the mass-murder theories of Russia'.[57] Michael Fry, in his book *Hitler's Wonderland*, went further. Hitler's antiSemitism was, he admitted, to the average person 'inexplicable'. In an 'objective' explanation of it, Fry went into German race theories, and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, before stating that 'the way in which a small number of Jews had managed to gain control of the nation's industrial, commercial and intellectual resources is what caused Hitler's grave misgivings'.[58] This had wider implications, for 'anyone conversant with international economics will agree that a small number of Jews all over the world control an enormous amount of the world's wealth'.[59]

It was true, said Fry, that only the powerful Jews should have been dealt with, and that 'the deliberate maltreatment of some very poor Jew whose only sin against the nation was his crooked nose, is inexcusable'. This was the fault of Hitler's minions, who failed to distinguish between 'the little Cohen who keeps a second-hand clothes shop in the *Dragonerstrasse'* and who 'never heard of the "Protocols"', and the real villains: 'Men like the Jewish "sexual scientists" – Jews who were active executives in the Communist Party – others who owned chains of brothels and vice dens and were connected with the worldwide drug ring – "graft-engineers" like the brothers Sklarek – unscrupulous speculators in finance and agriculture – Jews who were dishonest company-promoters and wholesale swindlers – intellectual Jews who tried, by various means, to destroy either Patriotism or moral restraint – Jewish theatre and film magnates with their ceaseless stream of "sexy" entertainment – those were the Jews Hitler was attempting to extirpate from Germany. And, for that, no one can blame him without openly siding with immorality and corruption – sometimes referred to as "advanced thought".'[60]

Some people, like Gordon Bolitho, were very much divided in their views. 'One does dislike the Jews here,' he wrote, 'but one dislikes also the persistent system of humiliation over hundreds of years which has drained the fine qualities out of their character.'[61] Despite this sympathy, he felt that the Jews were now as they were. 'I have seen the ghettoes of Poland, whence so many of the Jews came to Germany. England does not know what these people are like. Savage, embittered, pathetic people who have been taught to grasp and to hold.' These people had financed Communist activities; they had sent all their profits away from Germany. They had 'sucked the last mark out

of the people' and invested it abroad. Such people were 'a drain upon the country's resources', and 'as much an enemy to the peace of the State as a French aircraft or a Polish machine gun'.[62] One could say that they had never been given a chance; but how far could Germany be made to suffer for this?

The theme of the 'ghetto-bred Eastern European Jew', compared with our own British 'good citizens', whose ancestors had 'paused in Germany on the way and were washed',[63] was common. Rolf Gardiner in a study written in German referred to 'the Jews who had come from Russia, Poland and other Slav countries to Germany during and after the war, and who had added to German Jewry a very unpleasant element'. The Eastern Jews in England had almost always been through the filter of German culture, but when they first came to Berlin and Vienna they 'brought the smell of Asia with them in their beards'. They were often 'restless Ahasueruses'.[64] According to the Nazis, said Gardiner, these Jews had misused German hospitality. On the other hand, in his view persecution could have a boomerang effect. And there were many Jews who had been 'Germans and Europeans in the highest sense'. Others, like the journalist Georg Bernhard, who had gone to Paris to preach hatred against Germany, were a different matter. But, in Gardiner's view, 'every country has the Jews that it deserves.'[65]

In a sense, most of those who felt that Germany was a 'special case' were attempting to temper one form or other of antiSemitism with a justification, for the British public, of what was happening. It was accepted that, as Ropp warned Rosenberg in May 1934, German anti-Jewish propaganda was counter-productive as far as the mass of British public opinion was concerned.[66] Perpetual references to the difficulty the British had in understanding the German problem prefaced these apologists' attempts to differentiate between Central Europe and Great Britain.

Excuses for Nazi antiSemitism: (2) Russia is just as bad

This was one of the constant cries throughout the thirties. From pro-Semites to antiSemites, from those who admired Germany to those who merely felt that we had to get on with her, people were concerned to draw parallels with the Communist dictatorship. Sharf[67] singles out the *Catholic Herald*, in the years 1933–4, as a journal which accompanied its reports on German antiSemitism 'with the not infrequent comment that Jews had done, and were doing, as much and worse to the Christian population of the Soviet Union'. Though not many papers took this extreme view, numerous individuals did. It was asked, in a phrase which must seem familiar to readers nowadays, in a different context: 'Why do you condemn repression in one place, and not in another?' The answer to this rhetorical question was, naturally, 'because you are biased towards Soviet Russia.'

There were many fairly moderate exponents of this view. We shall see Lord Winterton, in early 1936, as a typical example of it in his controversy with Wickham Steed in *The Times*.[68] Such people saw both Germany and Russia as being wrong in their internal policies, and therefore believed in a kind of *Realpolitik* in relation to them. This attitude became fairly widespread as Germany's 'threat potential' became clearer; in 1933–4 there was less cause for it, and the 'Russian parallel' was more likely to be an obfuscation of the issues in a pro-Nazi cause.

One of the most remarkable statements, in this context, was that made by the Bishop of Gloucester[69] in his diocesan magazine in mid-1933, in which he succeeded in attacking the Jews as well as condemning antiSemitic violence.

'We all condemn', he wrote, 'the folly and violence of those attacks upon the Jews in Germany, and the violence with which the members of the Socialist and Communist parties are being treated, but to both Jews and Socialists some words of warning are necessary.

‘Many Jews were responsible, particularly at the beginning, for the violence of the Russian Communists; many Jews have helped to inspire the violence of the Socialist communities; they are not altogether a pleasant element in German, and in particular in Berlin life.

‘Our English Socialists at present are violent in their attacks upon Germany, and are proposing to boycott German goods. We cannot help remembering that they have shown little desire to condemn the far worse atrocities which have been perpetrated in Russia.’[70]

Excuses for Nazi antiSemitism: (3) It does not exist, or is exaggerated

‘I read the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail* with wonder. Are these atrocities happening at my door? Is this *Germany* of which they are writing?’[71] Thus Gordon Bolitho, forgetting his excusing of ‘the tyranny against the Jews’ which ‘continues … as strong today as it was a hundred years ago’.[72] Disingenuous as he may seem, there were many other people who quite honestly could not believe what they read in the papers; and there were many who did not want to believe.

To help such people in their disbelief, there was a great deal of propaganda about press coverage of the Nazi régime. Sometimes, as we have seen, it was claimed that the press was run by Jews; but this was hardly likely to convince people who were at any rate shocked by antiSemitism. It was more a call to the antiSemitic faithful. To persuade other people, accusations of general press ignorance, exaggeration or even malice were much more effective.

G. E. O. Knight, ‘feeling that the press of this country was wilfully lying and conducting a political campaign against Germany’, went to investigate. He visited concentration camps, where he was ‘up to all the tricks of the camp commanders’, and was able to make ‘free and personal contact with many of the prisoners, without any interference’. In Germany as a whole he saw ‘no murders of Jews’, but only ‘order and cleanliness … courtesy and kindness’. He had private conversations with Jews, which ‘did not bear out what the British newspapers suggested’. What were termed ‘assaults’ had merely been committed by over-zealous youths. ‘Mountains have been made out of molehills, melodrama out of comic opera.’ His Jewish friends were staying in Germany, and had no intention of leaving.[73] The harm was done by ‘news-editors who insist on “frightfulness” and not faithfulness in telegraphic reports’.[74]

It is extraordinary that, on the one hand, writers should praise German antiSemitic measures, and on the other deny that they were happening. Yet John Wolf referred to ‘the audacity of the lies circulated abroad about Hitler Germany’, and ‘the credulity with which such hair-raising stories are received’.[75]

So it is that one finds other people, who were by no means antiSemitic, but who found other things to admire in Germany, grasping at this straw. E. W. D. Tennant is a very good example. ‘A smokescreen of anti-Hitler propaganda continues to obscure from the outside world the nature of current events in Germany,’ he wrote. Though he was forced to admit that ‘the Nazis themselves provide much inflammable material’, he nevertheless felt that those who actually ‘penetrated the smokescreen’ and came into contact with present-day Germany ‘discovered to their surprise … that everything bad had been magnified and the good minimized’.[76]

Other attitudes to Nazi antiSemitism

In July 1933 the Prince of Wales expressed to Prince Louis Ferdinand (the Kaiser’s grandson) the view that ‘it was no business of ours to interfere in German internal affairs either *re* Jews or *re* anything else’.[77]

This was quite a common view. As George Ryley Scott put it, in his pamphlet *'Education' under the Hitler Regime*, 'There may be things in connection with Hitler's policy and Hitler's methods with which English people do not agree … But these matters are quite beside the main issue. Germany's internal affairs, her method of government, her system of education, are essentially her own private affairs. Probably Hitler and his associates are far more competent to deal with them than are any foreigners. And, at the moment, it seems to me, every civilised nation, not only in Europe, but in the world, has quite enough to do in dealing with what is on its own particular plate without meddling with anything on any other nation's plate.'[78]

To many people it seemed extraordinary that Germany's internal policies should be allowed to interfere with 'constructive' efforts at understanding. The British Legion is a very good example of this attitude.[79]

Among well-meaning and Christian-minded searchers for peace, other attitudes developed. Though they deplored Nazi antiSemitism in the strongest terms, they were convinced that to boycott Germany because of it was only to make things worse. Lord Lothian is an example of this attitude. 'I do not believe that individual protests under existing circumstances will have any effect except to salve our own consciences',[80] he wrote. He believed, like many, that the excesses were part of the chaos of the first stage of the revolution, and that 'like most revolutions it will now evolve, and it is essential that its evolution towards moderation should take place under British influences and the best way of ensuring that is to show that people in this country are interested in Germany and prepared to meet them on ordinary terms'.[81] These views were shared by many. 'I deplore … the antiSemitic legislation of Germany', wrote Sir Arnold Wilson in early 1936, 'but I can think of no worse method of convincing Germans that they are wrong than to sever cultural relations or to rebuff ancient foundations of learning.'[82] M. G. Balfour, of Magdalen College, Oxford, felt that 'the best way of bringing the country back to sanity and kindliness will be for other nations to show an appreciation of [the] difficulties, and a real willingness to help in their solution. Turning the cold shoulder will only provoke the Germans to persevere, and create an intellectual isolation quite as dangerous to the peace of Europe as those measures which we all deplore'.[83]

After all, it was to a large extent our fault that this extremism had developed. 'Germany has to wrestle with many desperate difficulties to which we have ourselves contributed and are still contributing … It is this pressure which has caused recent events in Germany, including the Jewish persecution, for that has to a large extent an economic basis.'[84]

While a large section of the British public, then, was horrified by tales of Nazi excesses (horrified enough to cause pro-Nazi apologists to make a variety of excuses for them), these excesses did not, of themselves, deter those people who, for diverse reasons, were in favour of holding out the hand of friendship to Germany. There were always good reasons to put such things in the background.

Working-class antiSemitism and British politics

The excesses of Nazi antiSemitism brought many 'parlour antiSemites' to a realisation of the consequences of their ill-formulated views; and the general reaction of the inhabitants of Great Britain was, as we have seen, negative. The most violent antiSemitic thinkers, of course, continued on their way (though even they felt they had to excuse Nazi brutality); other people tried to sweep it all under the table; but those who actively *supported* the Nazi policies were in the minority.

It is ironic, therefore, that Nazi policies should *indirectly* have led to a growth of British antiSemitism in a specific area of the national life. The catalyst for this was the prospect of a wave

of Jewish immigration caused by Nazi persecution.

Those who were most likely to react to this were the inhabitants of the areas most hit by immigration. In the case of the Jews, this meant, above all, London's East End, where a great deal of antiSemitism already existed. The main Jewish immigrations had taken place between 1880 and 1910, caused by the pogroms in Eastern Europe. Hard-working, and therefore eventually successful, the Jews presented a challenge to their working-class neighbours, who felt that all this success was perhaps being achieved at their expense. They also provided competition for houses and jobs, at a time when both were scarce; and, added to this, there was the very 'foreignness' of them. In its xenophobia, the British working class differs very little from that of other countries; what is lacking to it is a viable political outlet.

The prospect of a further wave of immigration brought these attitudes out once more. Colonel Lane's *The Alien Menace*, which pandered to such fears, significantly had renewed success at this time. The kind of people it appealed to, as well as the inhabitants of the immigrant areas, was that group of middle-class semi-professionals, living in boring suburban areas, who always seem to take up such extremist ideas, and whom we shall see, later, as the backbone of the Link.

A business man whose premises were in the East End, and who spoke to Sir Arnold Wilson on a train in early 1934, gave some typical views: 'Resentment at Jewish methods and Jewish clannishness in certain trades was deeper and more widespread than was often realized … Jewish predominance in certain trades was unhealthy because it bred bitterness, and their pre-marital adventures, always with non-Jewish girls, accentuated the age-long hostility of the masses … Our ancient tradition of tolerance predisposed us to close our eyes to these things, but he thought the public resentment was rising and was the more dangerous because it was not reflected in the Press.'[85]

Attempts to make political capital out of this situation, in the framework of British parliamentarism, were remarkably unsuccessful. The major political parties realised that the mass of the electorate were more tolerant than the most vociferous partisans of any racial policy, and that, while the reactions of those in an immigrant area should be understood and appreciated, it was nevertheless electoral suicide to take anything other than moderate measures to palliate the situation. The political fate of a small number of Conservative MPs who attempted to stir up racial feelings illustrates this perfectly.

The two most prominent MPs concerned were Edward Doran, Unionist MP for Tottenham North, and Arthur Leonard Bateman, Unionist MP for North Camberwell.

Doran was a 'populist' Conservative. Born in Manchester in 1892, he had been successively a railway worker, and a worker in the film industry. He was obsessed with all those questions relating to Jews which affected the working class: unemployment, housing, *etc*. On 9 March 1933 he asked a question and two supplementaries which are typical. He asked the Home Secretary if 'in view of the present situation in Germany', he would 'take steps to prevent any alien Jews entering this country from Germany'. Was the Home Secretary aware, he wondered, 'that hundreds of thousands of Jews are now leaving Germany and scurrying from there to this country'. If we were prepared to allow aliens from every country to come here, when we had three million unemployed, 'if you are asking for a von Hitler in this country, we will soon get one'.[86]

Doran was the master of the emotive phrase, and the innuendo. On 11 April, in view of the 'great resentment and anxiety' in the country at 'the invasion of undesirable aliens', he asked that they should be given 'notice to quit'.[87] On 25 May he asked for the number of moneylenders registered in this country, *and their nationality*.[88] Many questions related to the numbers of aliens who had been admitted. In December he moved on to a completely new tack, asking whether the Government was aware 'that there are operating in this country 3,000 fraudulent bankrupts, who

are mainly alien Jews'. He asked whether any action was going to be taken 'to protect the British trader against these economic vultures who are picking the flesh – [interruption]'.[89]

Further comments by Doran in 1934 and 1935 (including a full speech on 19 March 1935) followed much the same line.

Bateman, described by *The Patriot* as 'a strong critic of the Jews', had come up *via* local government, having been a Camberwell councillor from 1922 to 1931. He was also a keen City liveryman, being a member of the Worshipful Company of Basket-makers, and a Freeman of the City of London. It was his disappointment in his ambition to become a sheriff of the City of London which led to his greatest outburst against the Jews, which took place just outside the Palace of Westminster.

In this election of sheriffs the two successful men had been Alderman Isidore Nathan Jacobs and Mr Samuel George Joseph. Bateman, who lost, gave an interview to the *Daily Herald* after the election, in which he said:

> 'I am not complaining. I am going to the House of Commons to tell the Attorney-General and Mr Ramsay MacDonald that I will stand again next year – even though they put another two Jews against me.
>
> 'The position is getting serious. I tell you we have lost the City of London to the Jews. They will hold it.
>
> 'Before long we shall have to declare war on them as they have done in Germany. Do you realise that the whole of Jewry was organised against me?'[90]

Both Doran and Bateman lost their seats in 1935. *The Patriot* blamed Doran's loss on the attacks that had been made on him by Conservative Central Office.[91] Indeed, he had had trouble with his own local Association, of which the Chairman said that 'any man who sided with the Jew persecution … was a cad'.[92] Bateman, having lost North Camberwell, was by 1939 trying to contest South Tottenham; but, as *The Patriot* noted, Conservative Central Office had been putting up National Labour Candidates against him.[93]

The examples of Doran and Bateman, while they show us some of the feeling on aliens which, it was believed, could be utilised at grass-roots level, also show us the discouragement given to such political action by the established political parties. AntiSemitism was not a major topic in the House of Commons again (except in relation to the activities of the Fascist movements) until much later in the thirties, with Captain Ramsay's conversion to the idea of a Judaeo-Masonic plot.[94] The 'parlour antiSemitism' of much English society did, of course, flavour quite a number of the exchanges in the House, as in the debate on the BUF on 24 July 1934, when the following questions were put by Messrs Greene[95] and Macquisten:[96]

> *Mr Greene*: Is it not a fact that 90 per cent of those accused of attacking Fascists rejoice in such fine old British names as Ziff, Kerstein and Minsky?
>
> *Mr Macquisten*: Were some of them called Feigenbaum, Goldstein and Rigotsky and other like good old Highland names?[97]

The immigrant question was, however, on the whole ignored. And while the avoidance of extremist racial stances was to be welcomed, one MP was nevertheless worried that the House's complete neglect of the question might be the main factor in the emergence of extremist extra-parliamentary groups in those areas where feeling was high. This was Sir Arnold Wilson, Conservative MP for Hitchin, whose own attitude to antiSemitism was clear. In 1935 he declared that he viewed 'the more recent recrudescence of persecution of Jews in Germany and particularly

the latest speech of Dr Goebbels with disgust and resentment'. Something ought to be done by this country, other than mere expressions of disappointment. 'I should like to see', he said, 'an even more generous attitude adopted by this country in such exceptional circumstances towards the victims of persecution.'[98]

If, on humanitarian grounds, Wilson welcomed Jewish immigration, he nevertheless saw the dangers of ignoring the grievances of those in the immigrant areas. Failing to deal with them led inexorably to antiSemitism and to Fascism. Jew-baiting was not solely due to the Fascists; it had its origins elsewhere, and Fascism merely made use of it. 'It has its basis in grievances long felt, and now becoming more serious in certain branches of administration of the law, such as hire purchase and housing rentals.'[99]

'I have watched with alarm and anxiety', he said in 1936, 'the growth of antiSemitism in the last three years, by no means connected always with Fascist teachings. The Government would do well to consider closely the economic and juridical bases of the growing feeling that certain classes of the community unquestionably have that they are the victims of one particular section of the community. I do not support that thesis, but it is sincerely and honestly held by decent men in regard to certain branches of the retail trade, and more particularly in regard to the ownership of some of the worst houses.

'Certainly the basis of anti-Jewish feeling in some parts of England is primarily economic; the sooner we realise that the better. Fascism in some aspects is really an indictment of this House.'[100]

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the case, the discontented populations of certain areas, who had grievances which Parliament and the major political parties were unable and unwilling to deal with, were fertile ground for extra-Parliamentary political groups. The various Fascist movements all eventually moved in this direction.

1 For a comparison with the views of the French Right, see Richard Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution*, Constable, 1966.

2 Hilaire Belloc, *The Jews*, Constable, London, 1922.

3 See Professor Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, London, 1967.

4 *The Times*, 16–18 Aug. 1921.

5 Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Labour, 1920–1924*, Cambridge, 1971, p. 83.

6 The Duke of Northumberland, 'The Truth about the Strike', quoted in Cowling, op. cit., p. 81.

7 Arnold Leese, *Out of Step*, Guildford, 1951, p. 50.

8 Leonard Wise: *Arthur Kitson* (Great Monetary Reformers, 2), London, [1946]. See also *The Times* obituary, 4 Oct. 1937.

9 Arthur Kitson: *The Bankers' Conspiracy which started the World Crisis*, London, 1933.

10 Nesta H. Webster: *Spacious Days, An Autobiography*, Hutchinson & Co., n.d.

11 'The Origin & Progress of the World Revolution', address given by Mrs N. Webster at the Royal Artillery Institution, Woolwich, 30 Nov. 1920.

12 Ibid.

13 Nesta Webster, *World Revolution: The Plot Against Civilization*, London, 1922, p. 307.

14 Ibid., p. 309.

15 Ibid., p. 315.

16 Nesta Webster, *Secret Societies & Subversive Movements*, London, 1924, p. 368. The French writer, Céline, said of this book: 'Lisez en anglais *Secret Societies* de Webster. C'est un livre capital. Même vos férus de livres négligent les véritables documents.' (Letter, quoted in P. Alineyras, 'Céline, aux sources d'un système', *French Review*, Oct. 1973, p. 44.)

17 And not only the inter-war years. Even in the 1970s, unsuspecting householders who get on the wrong mailing lists may receive, through the post, missives from such bodies as 'The British League of Rights'. One such letter, received in 1975 from the National Director, contained 'a booklist from our specialist division Bloomfield Books', which has 'established a special working relationship with The Britons Publishing Co. to make sure that over the years there is a steady flow of the right kinds of book available'. The recommended reading includes Nesta Webster's *World Revolution*, by 'a great English lady and historian', and also her *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements*, 'deservedly acclaimed as the classic authority on the subject', as well as the 85th edition of the

Protocols, and Lt.-Col. J. Creagh Scott's *Hidden Government*, which relates the plan set out in the Protocols 'to actual events in the modern world'. There is even a book caled *Judaism and the Vatican*, by Count Léon de Poncins, which 'quotes from Jewish texts exposing the plot to get the recent Vatican Council to delete "antisemitic" references from the Gospel of the Passion'.

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19 'Sapper', *Bulldog Drummond at Bay*, London, 1935, p. 184.

20 T. S. Eliot, *Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a cigar*, 1920, Stanza 4.

21 Ibid., Stanza 6.

22 'The Grave Situation in Germany', *The Patriot*, Feb. 1933, pp. 114–15.

23 'German Propaganda', *The Patriot*, 23 Feb. 1933, p. 153.

24 'Some Reactions to Hitlerism', *The Patriot*, 30 March 1933, PP· 249–50·

25 Ibid.

26 'Germany's Revived Nationalism', *The Patriot*, 18 May 1933, p. 398.

27 Ibid.

28 'Disarmament', *The Patriot*, 25 May 1933, pp. 418–19.

29 'The Hitler Purge', *The Patriot*, 12 July 1934.

30 *The Patriot*, 2 Aug. 1934, pp. 89–90.

31 *The Patriot*, 2 May 1935, p. 341.

32 'Relief for "Victims of Fascism",' *The Patriot*, 21 Feb. 1935, p. 144.

33 'Public Opinion', *The Patriot*, 5 Sept. 1935.

34 Nesta Webster, 'Germany and the Jews', *The Patriot*, 13 April 1933.

35 Nesta Webster, *Germany and England*, London, 1938.

36 John Wolf, *Nazi Germany*, London, 1934, p. 26.

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38 Charles Grey Grey, b. 1875. Editor of Jane's *All the World's Aircraft*: founder of *The Aeroplane*, 1911, and editor until 1939.

39 C. G. Grey, Editorial, *The Aeroplane*, 19 April 1933, p. 670.

40 C. G. Grey, Editorial, *The Aeroplane*, 24 May 1933, p. 923.

41 C. G. Grey, Editorial, *The Aeroplane*, 19 April 1933, p. 670.

42 C. G. Grey, 'On Japheth and the Jews', *The Aeroplane*, 9 Aug. 1933.

43 C. G. Grey, 'On The Truce of the Bear', *The Aeroplane*, 31 Jan. 1934.

44 C. G. Grey, 'On Japheth and the Jews', *The Aeroplane*, 9 Aug. 1933, pp. 241–3.

45 G. E. O. Knight, *In Defence of Germany*, London, 1933, p. 9.

46 G. E. O. Knight, *In Defence of Germany*, 15th edition, London, 1934, p. 18.

47 G. E. O. Knight, *Germany's Demand for Security*, London, 1934, p. 12.

48 A. C. Maclaren, 'Anti-German Propaganda', letter to *Anglo-German News and Views*, 31 March 1934.

49 Gordon Bolitho, *The Other Germany*, London, 1934, p. 225.

50 Wyndham Lewis, *Hitler*, London, 1931, p. 35.

51 Ibid., p. 36.

52 Ibid., p. 37.

53 Ibid., pp. 42–3.

54 G. E. O. Knight, *In Defence of Germany*, London, 1933, p. 8.

55 Ibid., p. 8.

56 Lt.-Gen. Sir George MacMunn, b. 1869. C.-in-C, Mesopotamia, 1919–20. Commander of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, 1932–8.

57 Lt.-Gen. Sir George MacMunn, *Leadership through the Ages*, London, 1935, p. 344·

58 Michael Fry, *Hitler's Wonderland*, London, 1934, p. 93.

59 Ibid., p. 96.

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61 Gordon Bolitho, *The Other Germany*, London, 1934, p. 48.

62 Ibid., p. 223.

63 Ibid., p. 17.

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68 See p. 193.
69 The Revd Arthur Cayley Headlam, Bp. of Gloucester from 1923. See p. 175–7.
70 Reprinted in *The Patriot*, 10 Aug. 1933.
71 Gordon Bolitho, *The Other Germany*, London, 1934, p. 225.
72 Ibid., p. 51.
73 G. E. O. Knight, *In Defence of Germany*, London, 1933, pp. 11–13.
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75 John Wolf, *Nazi Germany*, London, 1934, p. 46.
76 E. W. D. Tennant, 'Herr Hitler's Constructive Policy', *English Review*, Jan. 1935.
77 Robert Bruce Lockhart, *Diary*, 13 July 1933 (1, 262).
78 George Ryley Scott, *'Education' under the Hitler Regime*, London, 1934, p. 7.
79 See pp. 127–37.
80 Lord Lothian, letter to Lord Allen of Hurtwood, 18 Oct. 1935 (quoted in Butler, *Lord Lothian*, p. 206).
81 Lord Lothian, letter to Reginald Coupland, 11 July 1935 (quoted in Gilbert, *The Roots of Appeasement*, p. 163).
82 Sir Arnold Wilson, letter to *The Times*, 7 Feb. 1936.
83 M. G. Balfour, letter to *The Times*, 8 Feb. 1936.
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89 *Hansard*, 14 Dec. 1933.
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92 *Tottenham and Edmonton Weekly Herald*, 25 Aug. 1933.
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94 See pp. 353–5.
95 William P. C. Greene, Conservative MP for Worcester since 1923. Landowner in Australia.
96 F. A. Macquisten, a Conservative MP with business interests in Rhodesia.
97 *Hansard*, 24 July 1934.
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[3]

Fascist Movements, Anti-Semitism, and Germany

IN THEIR search for anti-Semitic policies in the thirties, the Fascist parties naturally took Nazi Germany as an example. Though the main group was the British Union of Fascists, there were three other groups which we should look at in the period 1933–5, to see the various forms of anti-Semitic development based on the forces we have seen in the last chapter. Though these movements were numerically insignificant, their developing attitudes towards anti-Semitism and Nazi Germany are interesting in relation to parallel trends in the more moderate public. In the case of the first one, the British Fascists, it will be instructive to look at the four separate phases of development through which it passed from 1923 to 1935.

(i) *The British Fascists*

This, the earliest of our Fascist movements, was founded in 1923. Its founder, Miss Rotha Lintorn-Orman, a young woman of twenty-eight,[1] came of a military family, and had served during the Great War in an ambulance unit in Serbia. She had then become Commandant of the Motor School at Devonshire House, in charge of instruction of all ambulance drivers for the Red Cross.

As with the other Fascist movements we shall be seeing, the character of the founder set its stamp upon the early movement. The 'British Fascisti,' as they were first called (in 1924 they were incorporated as a limited company, with the more British title of 'British Fascists, Ltd.') were basically a Conservative movement, obsessed by the dangers of civil emergency. In this period the emergence of the Labour Party as a formidable political power, while it was a considerable factor in the thinking of Conservative politicians,[2] had a far more startling effect upon the views of their less intelligent supporters. The publicity given to trade-union policies of achieving political objectives by direct industrial action led to a great deal of alarm. The example of the Russian Revolution was before everyone's eyes, and, as so often during this century, military and patriotic people felt the need to create organisations which could counter this threat, maintain public order, and guarantee essential services. Miss Lintorn-Orman's was not the only bed which harboured a great variety of subversive dangers beneath it.

'At the beginning of 1923, she saw the need for an organisation of disinterested patriots, composed of all classes and of all Christian creeds, who would be ready to serve their country in any emergency.'[3] The example of Mussolini, who had come to power the previous October, lay before her; Fascism, it seemed, had come to save Italy from Bolshevism. Her movement must be based upon this new, virile régime.

On the enrolment form, entrants undertook 'to uphold His Most Gracious Majesty King George V, his heirs and successors, the established constitution of Great Britain, and the British Empire', and to 'render every service in my power to the British Fascisti in their struggle against all treacherous and revolutionary movements now working for the destruction of the Throne and Empire'.[4] Union Jacks were a large part of the scene, as was the motto 'For King and Country'. Among the movement's activities was the stewarding of Conservative Party meetings. There was,

naturally enough, no trace of corporatism, or of revolutionary doctrine. As Arnold Leese, who joined for a short time, put it with disgust: 'I found that there was no Fascism, as I understood it, in the organisation, which was merely Conservatism with Knobs On; it was justified by the Red attempts to smash up meetings of the Right, but it should never have been misnamed.'[5]

Membership of the movement seems to have been mainly military, naval and 'county', with the lower ranks consisting of loyal working-class toughs. Brigadier-General Robert Blakeney (later a member both of Leese's Imperial Fascist League and of Mosley's BUF) was president from 1924 to 1926. Prominent members included the Earl of Glasgow,[6] Admiral John Armstrong, Lord Ernest Hamilton, Brigadier-General Sir Ormonde Winter,[7] Colonel Sir Charles Burn,[8] the Marquess of Ailesbury,[9] Viscountess Downe,[10] the Baroness Zouche of Haryngworth,[11] Lady Menzies of Menzies, the Rt. Hon. Sir Arthur Hardinge[12] and Brigadier-General T. Erskine-Tulloch. The County Commanders were mainly military men or landed gentry. Yorkshire, for example, had Sir C. Graham, Bt., DSO, JP, DL (North Riding), Colonel T. C. Gurney, DSO (East Riding), and Capt. W. Coates, JP, and Colonel M. J. Stapylton, OBE (West Riding). Kent had Brigadier-General G. Soady, Warwickshire Captain D. Melville, MC, and the Western Command Capt. C. Barrington and Capt. J. H. Rowlandson. Naval men included Rear-Admiral W. E. R. Martin (Cornwall) and Captain S. C. Warner, RNR (Sussex).

The movement was in no way anti-capitalist and, 'whatever their private views, they were not officially anti-Semitic'.[13] They might worry occasionally about 'aliens', but such worries were not central to their policy, which stood for British values, the Empire, and the *status quo.* Some of the more aggressive members of the movement did, in fact, split off in 1925 to form a splinter group called the National Fascisti (which within a few weeks, after a further split, became the British National Fascisti); they had what A. K. Chesterton described as a 'more virile policy',[14] which in fact meant blatant anti-Semitism. But like most of the other Fascist splinter groups of the twenties, they had little importance, and lasted only a few years.

The General Strike of 1926 was a traumatic experience for the British Fascists. Here was the great test they had been awaiting. Yet despite later claims that the aims of the 'Moscow brutes and their English accomplices' had been 'foiled … due in great measure to British Fascism',[15] which had 'produced a steady stream of patriotic workers and fighters',[16] the reality was far less heroic. The British Fascists offered their help,[17] but it was refused, unless they gave up calling themselves Fascists, and dismantled their military organisation. This caused a major split in the movement, for when the Grand Council, by a very narrow margin, rejected the Government's demands, General Blakeney, Admiral Armstrong and the Earl of Glasgow were among those who thereupon left the movement, and founded another called the Loyalists,[18] which collaborated with the Government's Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies.

Despite the loss of these members, the movement was to retain very much the same characteristics for the next few years (as can be seen, for example, from membership lists of the Grand Council, which remained military and county)[19] though there was a serious decline in numbers and importance.

The only unusual name to be found on these lists is Mrs Nesta Webster, who appears to have been on the Grand Council for a couple of years around 1926–7. Her membership might lead one to suspect a move towards anti-Semitism, but the movement's constitutional and political manifesto, published in 1927, showed mainly a concern with Empire Trade, with the germ of a Fascist policy in some of its principles on industry and organisation of the state. Various matters with regard to aliens were mentioned, and membership of the British Fascists was to be strictly confined to those of British birth and parentage, and Christian creed.[20] But all this was little advance on the mistrust of aliens shown in earlier BF statements, and there is no hint of a full-

blown anti-Semitic policy. Mrs Nesta Webster was ideally suited to the original aims of the British Fascists, because of her conviction that the world was beset by a conspiracy of dark, revolutionary forces; by the time that anti-Semitism came to the movement as a central theme, she appears no longer to have been a member of it.

The main reason for the decline of the British Fascists in the years following the General Strike was probably not due to the split that had occurred. It probably owed more to the fact that the fears of the early twenties had been unjustified: 'No village Soviets appeared, not even in 1926 during the General Strike, and with no revolution in sight members forsook the British Fascisti.'[21] The three further stages through which the movement went appear to have been efforts to find a new role, and a new appeal.

Soon a significant change in membership took place. By 1930,[22] in the party leadership, we hear little of the 'colonels', with the exception of Colonel H. W. Johnston, now Officer Commanding the Men's Units, and Colonel A. G. B. Lang, now presiding over the Kensington Fascist Group. In *British Fascism*, the journal of the organisation, little was heard of the county organisations, which appear to have atrophied. Two new developments had, however, taken place, which were to have some significance in a year or two's time: the formation of an Irish Free State Command and of an Ulster Command.

Apart from these two developments, there appears to have been a concentration on the London area. The atmosphere seems to have been less one of 'an urban, back-street character',[23] as Cross suggests, than of genteel enthusiasm, with dances, variety shows, and formal occasions such as the investiture at which Colonel Johnston was given the Golden Order of the Fasces and 'Mr Mandeville Roe's Fascist Song was very ably rendered by Mrs Harnett'.[24] The movement, in class terms, had moved down a notch or two. With the departure of most of the military men, their place on the Grand Council was taken by a number of civilians, including three people who were to be of importance in Fascist circles from now on: E. G. Mandeville Roe, a young schoolmaster enthusiastic for corporatism, Neil Francis-Hawkins, a former salesman of surgical instruments, and Mrs D. G. Harnett, Commander of the Ulster Command. Roe and Francis-Hawkins were later to be prominent members of the BUF, and Mrs Harnett, in the late thirties, was a member of the Link.

In the years 1930–1, under the influence of Mandeville Roe, a large element of corporatism (which had been adumbrated in their 1927 manifesto) became central to BF policy. This, the second phase of the BF, was nevertheless not a complete break with former policies, for there was still a great concern with matters to do with the Empire, and the Unity Band (Chief Organiser: Lt.-Col. Oscar Boulton), which collaborated with the BF on the journal *British Fascism*, was basically imperialist, anti-pacifist and anti-internationalist. There were also some signs of increasing fear of aliens, and determination to keep them down. All these characteristics were highlighted in *A Summary of Policy and Practice*,[25] produced in 1931.

1932 was a year of crisis for the BF, dominated by the attempted takeover by Sir Oswald Mosley. Nevertheless, before that crisis even dawned, the year started with what appears to have been a change of policy. For the first four months of the year, *British Fascism* contained a certain amount of virulent anti-Semitism (though admittedly this was merely a small proportion of each number, and not an editorial theme). This was clearly affected, above all, by the influence of German Nazism. Thus we find, in the January number of *British Fascism*, the translation of a violently anti-Jewish article from the *Völkischer Beobachter*,[26] the organ of the Nazi movement, and a very favourable review of a translation by Capel Pownall of Theodor Fritsch's *The Riddle of the Jews' Success*.[27] The February number contained a reference to *The Patriot* as 'a paper the Jews cannot gag'.[28] In the March number there were a number of anti-Semitic letters. It is nevertheless true to say that, at this stage, anti-Semitism was a mere facet of BF policy, and not a

central theme.

The major crisis which was once more to split the British Fascists started in February when Dr Robert Forgan approached them with a view to a takeover. In the course of February Neil Francis-Hawkins met Forgan, and also Mosley, with whom he was already very impressed. 'At the interview it was agreed that the aims of the two movements were very similar, and that it was foolish to carry on separate organisations and propaganda.'[29] The BF appeared to be biting.

During the negotiations it became clear that the Executive Council of the BF was split. There were three men and three women on it.[30] The men (Francis-Hawkins, Mandeville Roe and Johnston) were in favour of the merger. The women, under the influence of Miss Lintorn-Orman, reacted strongly against a movement which had a leader who seemed more concerned with personal power than with the good of the country. They saw the British Fascists as 'a power for good, blending all classes in what might be called "patriotic socialism", holding the simple creed of loyalty to His Majesty the King and the British Empire, putting country before self and the good of their fellow citizens *before* personal consideration.'[31]

When, at the Grand Council in May, the men's proposal was defeated, the most active members of the movement, including them, left to join the New Party, which was launched as the British Union of Fascists in October.

According to Skidelsky, Mosley described the rump of the British Fascists as consisting of 'three old ladies and a couple of office boys'.[32] The jibe is an odd one, as Miss Lintorn-Orman was only thirty-seven, and Mrs Harnett cannot have been much older.[33] But its general import is true, for this was the point from which the final decline of British Fascism really started.[34] In the next three years, in the period before it was wound up at the death of Miss Lintorn-Orman in 1935, it made valiant efforts to compete with the other Fascist groups, taking on, consecutively, two new policies in order to do so. But it had small numbers and almost no influence.

The two new policies, which are of interest to us in this study, were (1) Ulster loyalism, (2) Pro-Nazi anti-Semitism.

The first of these emerged under the influence of a strong personality, Mrs D. G. Harnett. Miss Lintorn-Orman had been taken seriously ill in July. For some time her life was in danger, and then she went to Northern Ireland to convalesce.[35] From now on she was to take a back seat in the organisation.

Mrs Harnett became editor of *British Fascism,* which now devoted itself to the Loyalist cause in Northern Ireland, which had been exacerbated by De Valera's rise to power in the Irish Free State. Signs of this could already have been seen in the number for spring 1932, in which two articles had appeared on the subject. The Mosley troubles had disrupted production of the journal, but the next number, in October, and the next one, in February 1933, were highly concerned with the Ulster question, with articles such as 'Shall we lose Ulster? No Surrender' and 'The Empire's Need of Loyal Ulster'.[36] The British Fascists, in a letter from Miss Lintorn-Orman to *The Patriot*, offered their services to the Loyalists of Ulster, and asked for volunteers to join their ranks. The danger was that 'De Valera is on the point of proclaiming an Irish Republic'.[37] At this stage the brief flirtation with Nazi anti-Semitism appears to have been forgotten. It is interesting that, at the moment of Nazism's rise to power in Germany, the only comment in the journal was one small note at the bottom of a page, saying that four members of the Executive Committee had called at the German Embassy, to give their congratulations.[38]

In the course of 1933 the BF had grave troubles, caused by the hostility of the BUF, who tried to put them out of existence. At one point their headquarters were attacked by about sixty men in BUF uniform; and their printers were threatened and intimidated. The next number of *British Fascism* came out only in August, and had to appear in duplicated, rather than printed, form.

Mrs Harnett and G. E. Eyre were the joint editors. One of the first surprises is the absence of the Ulster concern. Was this caused, perhaps, by the fact that De Valera's policy had turned out to be less dangerous to Ulster than expected? Or by the lack of success of this issue as a recruiting tactic? Or by the fact that 1933 had produced new concerns which might enable the BF to find a new source of recruits?

All three suggestions may have been true. This number contained a good deal on the question of Germany, and of anti-Semitism. Competing for public attention, the BF, like the Imperial Fascist League, claimed their own anti-Semitic purity, and the 'pro-Semitic' tendencies of the BUF, 'a type of so-calledFascism which is definitely identified with and supported by Jewish money, power and influence'.[39] Germany was praised, in the 'Editorial Notes', for knowing how to deal with the Jews, and the British people were called to follow their example:

> The Jewish campaign against Germany is in full swing accompanied by a welter of exaggeration … World Jewry has risen as a united body because Adolph [*sic*] Hitler has had the courage of demanding that Germans shall have priority in their own country. Jewry has shown its hand and has proved our point that the Jew cannot be a 'German' or a 'Britisher' or anything else but a Jew by race, outlook and culture. It is high time that the British people began to wake up to this fact and insisted that the Jew be regarded as an alien. To allow him to assume control of our politics, our finance and our commerce is sheer suicide for our Country and Empire.[40]

Now there was another long gap in the production of *British Fascism.* A financial crisis had occurred. By the time the next number appeared, in March 1934, the journal had completely changed. The new editor, Colonel H. C. Bruce-Wilson, who had guaranteed the movement's overdraft, apologised to the readers for the lapse of activities: 'The loss of both the joint editors, and the dislocation of normal activities during a period of reorganisation have resulted in an interregnum which is now at an end.'[41]

The new journal was even more German-orientated than the last number. It was also fiercely opposed to the other Fascist movements, while trying to compete with them. Among other items, the March number contained a translation of the Horst Wessel Song by Bruce-Wilson, and 'The Story of Horst Wessel', also by him.[42] The April number contained a lengthy article on 'Dictatorship' by Bruce-Wilson,[43] with great praise of Mussolini and Hitler. Alongside the ineffable statement that those visiting Italy must marvel at Mussolini's 'colossal achievements, by the side of which the miracles of Moses in the wilderness seem small', we find these words on Hitler: 'Hitler is Germany – and Germany awakened. Like a great burning-glass he has been able to focus in himself the innumerable fires of a reborn nation …'

Other articles in this number included 'The Nazis and Christianity', by G. H. Woods,[44] which claimed that the Nazi Government stood for Christianity.

In May the anti-Semitic trends continued; though the muddled statement of this anti-Semitism made it almost seem a claim for the Jews as the Master Race: 'Imperialism then is the control by the more efficient races over the less efficient … Internationalism is Jewish Imperialism.'[45] It is interesting to note that the same number included an article calling for British rearmament.[46]

The turn to anti-Semitism appears, above all, to have been an attempt to over-trump the other Fascist movements; and by 1934 Arnold Leese, who was attacking the BUF as being 'pro-Semitic', was also turning on the BF, the 'remnants' of whom he described as now copying Imperial Fascist League policy. This received a furious denial in the June number of *British Fascism,* where Bruce-Wilson trumpeted forth the BF's debt to Hitler and Nazism:

> Does Mr Leese seriously expect us to believe that he invented Fascism in 1928? We would

> recommend him to read an excellent book, with which he appears to be unacquainted, entitled 'Mein Kampf', by Adolf Hitler. He will find there the principles of that Racial Fascism, of which he appears to imagine himself the inventor, most admirably and lucidly developed … I am afraid that in that book there is no mention of Mr Arnold Leese.[47]

This was the last number of *British Fascism* to appear. The last remnants of the British Fascists were on the verge of dissolution, outflanked and outmanoeuvred (like the Imperial Fascist League) by the British Union of Fascists. The death of Miss Lintorn-Orman in March 1935 was of less importance in this process than dwindling income, and public apathy.[48] The movement was wound up in September.

Thus ended the British Fascists, a movement which, while its influence was 'negligible'[49] had had a large number of members in its heyday, and had reflected, often in a distorted form, the fears and hopes of many, at the various stages of its career. Its actual numbers, when it was at its height in the mid-twenties, are hard to assess. It was claimed that in early 1924 recruits were coming in at the rate of hundreds a week.[50] Benewick dismisses such claims as 'extravagant', and assesses its membership at 'only a few thousand'.[51] *The Patriot,* on the other hand, declared that at one time membership was 400,000;[52] and even a scornful enemy of the British Fascists, A. K. Chesterton, estimated that at the time of the General Strike membership was about half a million.[53] There is little solid evidence on either side.

In its last three years, it had tried various means to boost its numbers in a period of serious decline. One of these means had been anti-Semitism on the German model. It was in late 1933 that this first became a central plank of its platform; and, as we shall see, by late 1934 Mosley had taken over even this policy, and was appealing far more successfully to those who feared the Jews, in that he had a large, impressive and violent following. The BF never really escaped their original image (the scathing attacks of their opponents still made them out to be 'a glorified Boys' Brigade' run by women), and they were also shouldered out by the fact that their movement was obviously on the decline. The choice of anti-Semitism as a way to gain the public ear was, however, significant.

(ii) *The Imperial Fascist League*

Here was a movement which, from its start in 1929, took a violently anti-Semitic line. It was an aggressive movement in which all the extreme views held on the Jews in the twenties[54] came together in active form. In this sense, it was less a bower to public concerns than a vehicle for the extreme, and often crazed, views of its founder. Its intransigent views found an echo in the Nazi movement, whose successes were greeted with joy. Though the support for the movement appears to have been tiny, it received an inordinate amount of publicity for its size.

As with the other Fascist movements, the figure of the leader determined the emphasis of the doctrines, and the character of the action. Arnold Leese was a veterinary surgeon who had specialised in the illnesses of camels, and had spent twenty years practising in India and Africa. After the Great War he settled down in a practice in Stamford, eventually retiring in 1927.

The decisive influence on him was Arthur Kitson of the Britons, a close neighbour at Stamford, whom he heard addressing various political meetings, and who became a close friend. Through Kitson Leese came to see that control of the issue of money was power.[55] We have already seen how this view led Kitson to a realisation of the Jewish danger.

'Arthur Kitson had introduced me to the Jewish Menace', wrote Leese, 'Of which hitherto I had no real knowledge (I was 45 before I knew anything about what was going on behind the

political scenery).'[56]

Leese was introduced by Kitson to the Britons, from whom he got a copy of the *Protocols*. Everything in it 'rang true', he found. Why was the public not more alarmed by the menace? Because so little information about it was available. 'I determined to break that silence and to make the knowledge public property.'[57]

In 1924, the same year that he underwent Kitson's influence, Leese became interested in Italian Fascism. In his autobiography, he claims that at this stage this interest had been completely separate: 'I had watched with interest the bloodless revolution of Mussolini, who by sheer determination had ended the chaos into which Liberalism (disguised) had brought his country; it appeared to me that here was a movement which might end political humbug.'[58] He wrote a pamphlet called *Fascism for Old England,* and looked around for opportunities for action.

The first thing he did was join the British Fascists, then a new and thriving movement apparently basing itself on the Italian model. Leese and his friend Harry Simpson stood as Fascist candidates for Stamford in the 1924 local elections, and got in. But soon Leese realised the basically Conservative and un-Fascist nature of the BF movement, and left it in 1927.

His second move was to join the CINEF. His enthusiasm for the Italian experiment led him to become its British Correspondent.[59] His main policies were the reduction of governmental interference in almost every sphere of life, and a small electorate consisting of those 'who were willing to pay for the privilege',[60] by sacrificing one day's income.

It must be stressed that at this stage his keen interest in Fascism as a political theory, while complementing his anti-Semitism, seems to have been treated as a separate issue. When, in 1929, after his retirement to Guildford, Leese founded the Imperial Fascist League, its journal *The Fascist* concentrated, in its first numbers, above all on Fascism as a European ideal; the tone is that of the CINEF, and continual references are made to the works of other CINEF members. The number for March 1929, for example, contained comments on the following articles from other journals: 'The Fascist Grand Council', by M. H. H. Macartney (*Fortnightly Review,* January 1929), and 'Fascism', by J. S. Barnes (*National Review,* February 1929). The editorial was entitled: 'Making Britain Safe From Democracy'.[61]

The policy advocated was that of a corporate state, in which Parliament would have an Upper House appointed by the state, consisting of eminent members of the community (which sounds rather like the life peerages scheme) and a Lower House to which representatives of industry and other national occupations would be appointed. A Grand Council would form the executive. The only influence of Kitson to be discerned, at this stage, was in plans for monetary reform, and for the banning of Jews from citizenship.

H. H. Beamish, the founder of the Britons, was, however, a leading figure in the new movement (which also included General Blakeney, formerly of the British Fascists). Beamish claimed to have had a lot of influence on Hitler in the early years of the Nazi movement, and was very much *persona grata* with the Nazis in the years of their prominence. Within months the movement had taken on that strong anti-Semitic tinge which it was to maintain throughout its existence. In a sense, this had been part of Leese's vision from the moment he had met Kitson; the presence of Beamish underlined it.

'Jewish Money-Power' was their enemy, and *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* their Bible. By 1931 they had rejected Mussolini, whom they considered to be under Jewish control, and had turned to Beamish's friends the Nazis for their inspiration. By the time the Nazis came to power they had rejected the fasces as their emblem, and turned to the swastika (on a Union Jack background). They were thus the first of our Fascist movements to come under Nazi influence.

In 1932 the Imperial Fascist League, like the British Fascists, was approached by Sir Oswald

Mosley's emissaries, with a view to a takeover. Relations seem to have been cordial at first, and Mosley even chaired a meeting, on 27 April, at which Leese and Beamish spoke.[62] But Leese soon rejected the approach out of hand. As a 'Racial Fascist' he could not stand a movement which 'did not attempt to face the Jewish issue'.[63] He described Mosley's first wife, Cynthia Curzon, as 'the granddaughter of Levi Leiter, the flour-cornerer of Chicago' (little realising, it seems, that Sir Oswald had taken 'some pains to establish the ancestry of his wife's grandfather … and established that he was of Dutch-Calvinist and not Jewish extraction'[64]) and referred to Mosley's movement as 'Kosher Fascism'.[65]

Yet refusal to join Mosley led to serious troubles for the IFL. As Leese put it:

> He had the money, and we had not, and as he was a well-known figure in democratic politics and did not attempt to face the Jewish issue … he took what little wind there was out of our sails for a while … Mosley's advent was a disaster to Fascist development in Britain … Mosley's Kosher Fascism got newspaper publicity, and the special support of the *Daily Mail*, whilst the Imperial Fascist League was left in a position of comparative obscurity. Mosley's supporters appeared in strength to oppose us whenever we held a public meeting; the President of the Oxford University Jewish Society correctly summed up the position in writing to the *Jewish Chronicle* (29th September, 1933): 'Our greatest supporters in the fight against the Imperial Fascists are the Mosley Fascists themselves.'[66]

As the thirties proceeded, Leese's views became more and more violent and simplistic, and German influence upon *The Fascist* became strong.[67] In February 1935 Leese proposed, as 'the most certain and permanent way of disposing of the Jews', the gas-chamber, though he did not think it likely that the world would 'demand the adoption of that drastic procedure'.

It was in the mid-thirties that Leese gained a certain amount of notoriety with his allegations about Jewish ritual murder. These allegations, which seem almost medieval in nature, appeared in *The Fascist* for July 1936: 'It is well established', wrote Leese, 'in spite of many shameless denials, that Jews practise the ritual murder of Christians, in order to obtain fresh blood to mix in their ceremonial Passover bread.'[68] This last outrage was too great. The issue was raised in the House of Commons by D. N. Pritt and Commander O. Locker-Lampson.[69] On 21 September 1936 Leese was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for 'conspiring to create a public mischief'. He naturally claimed that Locker-Lampson was 'a childhood friend of the Rothschild family', and that the judge who tried him was 'a 31st degree Mason of the Scottish Rite'.[70] In the book on ritual murder which he wrote on coming out of gaol, he continued to level the same accusations at the Jews. He claimed to have sold thousands of copies without further prosecution. 'It was a great moral victory over a corrupt pro-Jewish regime.'[71]

Leese and the Imperial Fascist League remained resolutely pro-German throughout the thirties. But by contrast they opposed that 'pro-Semite' Mussolini in his attack on Abyssinia, which was seen as a Jewish plot.[6] Nazism was the only creed they were prepared to admire, and it is surprising that they kept the name 'Fascist' pure and unadorned. The only point on which they opposed German policy was, as for so many other pro-Nazis, the national issue of the former German colonies.

Their admiration for Germany made war unthinkable. Any such war was merely a device, by the Jews, to get rid of Hitler. In the 1939–40 period, Leese, like other anti-Semitic pro-Nazis such as Domvile and Ramsay, was aggrieved to find himself considered as being hostile to his own country, when he was merely trying to save it from the Jews by producing pamphlets against the war.

The Imperial Fascist League was perhaps the most extreme of the extremist groups in the period, and it had an atmosphere of inspired lunacy about many of its pronouncements. It was, in a sense, the active arm of the Britons. Its membership was small (though it was claimed that this was from design).[73] Though an extreme movement, it was violent more in words than in actions, and had a signal lack of success in coping with Mosley's toughs. Leese was often querulous in his complaints about his movement's treatment.

Mosley described the League as 'one of those crank little societies … mad about the Jews'.[74] The description is apt, for their anti-Semitism was not of the type which could attract political support among opponents of immigration; it was a wild belief in a world plot, and in all those legends about the Jews which had grown up in eastern Europe. Their main concern was the Jewish danger; and Germany was admired for the way it had dealt with it.

(iii) *The National Workers' Party*

This movement was founded in 1933 as the National Workers' Movement, later became the National Socialist Workers' Party, and by 1936 had become the National Workers' Party. Its life and doctrines were strongly affected by the character of its founder, Lt.-Col. Graham Seton Hutchison, and by his close contacts with Nazi Germany.

Hutchison was a Scotsman who had had a brilliant war career, gaining the MC and the DSO, and being mentioned in dispatches four times. After the war he devoted himself to ex-service movements; he was the first chairman of the Old Contemptibles Association, and a founder member of the British Legion. In 1923 he was the Liberal candidate for Uxbridge. A strong influence upon him was the year he spent on the Upper Silesian Commission, in 1920–1. Years later he was to write a pamphlet called *Silesia Revisited*, in which he stated the 'German wrongs' in that area, for which he was secretly paid by the Germans.[75] Under the name of Graham Seton, he became a highly successful writer of adventure stories. In 1930 Hutchison founded a group called the Paladin League, and a year or two later he appears to have joined the English Mistery.[76]

By 1933 Hutchison was believed by Bruce Lockhart to be 'a great friend of Hitler', and to be in German pay, as a publicist.[77] That this was true is shown by Rosenberg's diary, in which we find Hutchison betraying confidences by Bernstorff, the German diplomat. 'English belief in us has been very disturbed, wrote Rosenberg, 'by occurrences like the one between Colonel Hutchison and Bernstorff. H. met B. in Berlin and, in answer to his question, said that he was colossally impressed by the achievements of the Third Reich. To this B. replied: There will be a terrible crash.' Rosenberg placed before Hitler 'Hutchison's letter about Bernstorff's behaviour'. Hitler read it and said: 'What should one do with this swine?'[78]

The National Workers' Movement, which Hutchison founded in 1933, was violently pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic. It also played strongly on ex-service feelings of comradeship with the Germans, and a number of its meetings were arranged by local branches of the British Legion.[79] Another part of its appeal was to the unemployed; it criticised the Churches, which 'took sides with International Finance, and howled their calumnies at the New Germany', and raised money for Jewish criminals 'while Britons starved'.[80] It also claimed to be aiming for 'a classless community working in harmony for the national welfare', as was seen in Germany.[81]

The Nazi revolution, in Hutchison's view, had completely changed the face of Germany. 'The National Socialist régime recognises the age-old principle of "Blood and Soil". It will not tolerate the Jewish aliens in control of the national culture, of national institutions, and of political life.' National Socialism stood for 'positive Christianity'; to save the German race from physical and

moral degradation, it had 'destroyed the Jew-owned brothels and purged the State of the pervertions [*sic*] and grotesque impurities and corruption which Jewish finance had imposed.'[82]

By 1936 Hutchison was claiming that 'all the forces of World Jewry and Freemasonry have been enlisted to form an armed ring round Germany'. This had been helped by the lying propaganda of the 'Jewish press'. The Franco-Soviet Pact was 'an armed alliance, not of Nations, but between the criminals, all of whom are Grand Orient Freemasons or Jews'.

Mosley's party was attacked by him because it was Jewish-influenced. Mosley claimed to believe in nationalism, but did not realise that it could not exist 'without the essential background of Race'. Mosley 'conforms to the instructions of the *Protocols*', and for this reason the National Workers' Party was 'absolutely opposed to Fascism'.[83]

In 1936 the party mounted a campaign against war. They would not 'permit the cream of the youth of our country and of the Empire to be sent again to the shambles to line the purses of Jews and their puppets'.[84] After all, the Jews, to secure world power, deliberately produced 'war, civil commotion, crime and disease'.[85] People should join the National Workers' Party 'as an insurance policy for yourself and your son'.[86]

Like the later British Fascists, and like the Imperial Fascist League, the NWP was a small group, without a great following, which was insignificant beside the BUF. It is an interesting phenomenon, however, for a number of reasons: (1) the fact that it *started* from pro-Nazi policies, rather than appropriated them alongside previously-held ones; (2) its appeal specifically to ex-servicemen; (3) its claim to be a classless movement, rooted in concern for the working class.

(iv) *The BUF*

Mosley's movement, as we have seen, started with a certain amount of sympathy for both Mussolini and Hitler, though in its general lines and policies it seemed to base itself more on the Italian model. The Nazi movement was one more example of Fascist government, however, and was in general to be praised and supported, even if the main thing, for the BUF, was itself to be a national movement as opposed to part of an international system. Elements within the membership, of course, admired the violence and excess of Nazi methods from the first; other elements, particularly within the leadership, were embarrassed by them, and attempted to play them down. But it must be stressed that in no sense, until 1934, does the Nazi question appear to have had any centrality in BUF thought.

On anti-Semitism the situation is rather blurred. Some members were anti-Semitic (e.g. William Joyce). As early as June 1932 Mosley had included, in the draft of his *Greater Britain*, certain attacks on Jewish finance, which he withdrew at the request of Harold Nicolson.[87] In April 1932, at the time when he had been trying to encourage the lesser Fascist groups to join him, Mosley had chaired a meeting at which Arnold Leese and H. H. Beamish had spoken on 'The Blindness of British Politics under the Jew Money-Power.'[88] Anti-Jewish incidents at ground level soon showed Mosley, however, that there was a danger of the party losing 'respectable' support. An official party line was developed, with public statements denying anti-Semitism as part of BUF policy, and stressing that attacks on Jews were 'strictly forbidden', because 'bias for or against the Jew is completely irrelevant to the issues involved in our political creed'. Indeed, Mosley stressed that German anti-Semitic attacks 'do not rest on any Fascist principle but are the manifestation of an inherent quality in the German character'.[89] It is small wonder that Leese, Seton Hutchison and others should see the BUF as 'Kosher Fascism',[90] which 'conforms to the instructions of the Protocols'.[91]

Under the surface, however, there were strong anti-Semitic elements within the BUF; and, at the same time, at street level there were violent attacks on the BUF by Jews who associated them with the excesses of Nazism. It is meaningless to argue, as Mosley has done, that such attacks in some way excuse later Fascist anti-Semitic policy. It is even in doubt whether the Jewish view of the BUF was mistaken. Underneath the official policy, and the soothing voice of Robert Forgan as he wooed respectable middle-class Tories, there was a sea of latent violence. Mosley himself made anti-Semitic comments at times, and by early 1934 was claiming to be persecuted by Jewish interests.

Mid-1934 was, as we have seen, the decisive moment. The effect of the Olympia meeting was heavy on potential Conservative support; news of the Roehm purge brought further doubts about extra-parliamentary movements; Rothermere's withdrawal of support meant that the direction in which the BUF had seemed to be going was now sealed off.

It is significant that one of the reasons which Rothermere gave for his withdrawal was that he could never support a movement that had an anti-Semitic bias. This shows that anti-Semitism was already associated with the BUF. In late 1933 the *Blackshirt* contained a certain amount of specifically anti-Semetic material. Nevertheless, there was a change of policy which was to be decisive for the party's future.

From now on anti-Semitism was to be *central* to the party's policies. Why was this? Was it just that, with the withdrawal of the Conservative middle classes, the need for 'respectability' was no longer there, and people's true desires could come to the fore? This would be a misleading impression to give. A disorganised reaction of this kind would have taken a very different form. Everything points to the fact that there was a conscious decision to develop this policy in a more all-embracing manner.

Everything we have seen of Mosley in the years 1930–4 shows him as an opportunist. Successively he had tried to appeal to Left and Right, looked for parliamentary, then extra-parliamentary support. Some of his expectations had been completely unrealistic, some of his swift changes of policy completely counter-productive. All that had remained constant was his ineffable confidence in his own abilities.

Now, faced by a dead end in one direction, he turned to the opposite extreme. Deprived of respectable middle-class support, he turned to the streets. And, just as he had seen 'colour and drama' as an important element in an appeal to the working classes, he now seized on the emotive appeal of something to hate. The incidental anti-Semitism of the BUF became its most well-known article of policy in a very short time.

Of course, many of Mosley's anti-Semitic statements were made in moments of exasperation, both before and after June 1934; as early as October 1933 he had been referring to 'weapons of the Ghetto' which were being used at Fascist meetings, and claiming that the Jews were trying to dominate British life.[92] But the new approach was much more general.

A series of speeches in the north of England were followed by a meeting at the Albert Hall on 16 October, at which he denounced the Jews as a hostile force which, apart from anything else, was trying to drag Britain into war with Germany. By the end of the year, a full-blooded policy had been developed, in which 'the force of international Jewish finance', which had 'dominated Britain ever since the war', was blamed for all the ills of the present (and particularly for the ills of any particular area in which a speech might be being made, such as the cotton trade of Lancashire). This policy was to continue right up to the war. Skidelsky suggests that though 'Mosley was too intellectually sophisticated to be entirely happy with it', it was probable that 'he believed it enough to justify to himself using it for propaganda purposes.'[93]

At the same time as it moved towards anti-Semitism, the movement came out solidly in defence of Germany. Its reaction to the Roehm purge was to attack Roehm and the SA as traitors to

Hitler.[94] The sympathy which had sporadically been expressed in *The Blackshirt* for the Nazi experiment now became a major theme. An outward sign of some importance was the abandonment, in 1935, of the 'fasces' as the symbol of the BUF. This sign, redolent of Italian Fascism, was replaced by a flash of lightning within a circle. Early in 1936 the name of the movement was changed from 'British Union of Fascists' to 'British Union of Fascists and National Socialists', usually known as 'British Union' for short. As Cross points out, 'The use of "Fascist" or "Fascism" dropped out of the movement's literature and was replaced by "National Socialism".' The movement 'now took much more inspiration from Germany than it did from Italy'.[95] Mosley had had a private meeting with Hitler in May 1935,[96] and was to visit Germany again in October for his secret marriage to Mrs Diana Guinness. One must not forget that his future wife was much involved with the Nazi leaders, as was her sister Unity Mitford. Mosley himself now appeared to be far more acceptable to the Nazi leadership.

The centrality of the new policies to the BUF, the importance of anti-Semitism as a major plank in its platform, and the acceptance of Nazism as a companion in arms, are epitomised by the telegram Mosley sent to Julius Streicher in thanks for the latter's praise for one of Mosley's anti-Semitic speeches. Mosley's telegram, which was given extensive press publicity in Germany, ran as follows:

> Please receive my greatest thanks for your kind telegram in relation to my speech in Leicester, which was received while I was away from London. I esteem greatly your advice in the midst of our hard struggle. The forces of Jewish corruption must be overcome in all great countries before the future of Europe can be made secure in justice and peace. Our struggle to this end is hard, but our victory is certain.[97]

What effect did these new policies have on the membership? In early 1934 the movement had been a flourishing one. Yorkshire is a good example of the kind of support the BUF had at this time. A study undertaken by sixth-formers at a Yorkshire school provides us with some details. The Leeds branch of the BUF was founded in February 1934, and by mid-1934 2,000 members had joined it. Their social background was significant: 'The majority of the members came from the middle-class residential districts of Roundhay and Headingley in response to the pro-Blackshirt press campaign waged by Lord Rothermere in the *Daily Mail*.'[98] By June, further branches had been organised in York, Hull, Doncaster, Sheffield, Harrogate and Bradford.

The middle-class shift from the BUF was closely reflected in Leeds. 'Membership fell rapidly towards the end of 1934.'[99] Leeds had the highest percentage of Jewish population of any town in Britain, and from late 1934 onwards anti-Semitic policies were put forward strongly by the BUF. Such policies had had adherents in the city before: the Imperial Fascist League had had a strong branch there, and there had also been a branch of Edward Doran's Liberators Group. Members of the IFL now joined the BUF. Nevertheless, membership still fell, and by the autumn of 1935 there were about 1,000 members. By mid-1937 this had fallen to about 500, and it was only the approach of war that increased the membership again, to about 1,000 by 1939.[100]

Mosley's main strength, from now on, was in the main areas of Jewish immigration – the East End in particular. The party's experience in the textile towns of Yorkshire shows, however, how small such support was likely to be even in areas which seemed ripe for trouble.

The history of the BUF, from 1936 onwards, consists of two main elements: the campaign in the East End of London, with its violence and street-brawling, and the campaign against war with Germany. The first, while showing a certain amount of strength of support for the movement in certain parts of the community, effectively counted it out as a political force of any importance

(such as it might have been before 1934); the second, while of interest to our study, is not central to it, mainly because the BUF were now of so little importance. They had become one of those extremist movements, like the IFL and the BF, which were outside the main experience of the British people.

Conclusion

The various Fascist movements all, in the early and mid-thirties, showed a predilection for anti-Semitism. In some cases it had been there from the start of the movement. In others it became a central policy for the first time, for a number of reasons, including an immediate appeal to those suffering from the effects of immigration. All these movements linked their anti-Semitic policies to an admiration for Nazi Germany. They are, nevertheless, something of a red herring in our study of pro-Nazi trends: three of the movements concerned were very small indeed, and the fourth was, by this stage, of little political importance even though it was to regain some strength in 1939. The extremists who by now made up the backbone of the BUF were untypical of general public attitudes, though the influence of some of them will be of interest to us in our study of a later pro-Nazi phenomenon, the Link.

1 See 'Who began Fascism in Great Britain', *British Fascism*, 1 March 1932. This is contrary to the picture which is sometimes given of her as a middle-aged spinster, *e.g.* Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley*, London, 1975, p. 291: 'Started in 1923 by Miss Rotha Lintorn-Orman, "a forthright spinster of thirty-seven with a taste for mannish clothes."'

2 See Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Labour 1920–24*, Cambridge, 1971, *passim.*

3 'Who began Fascism in Great Britain', *British Fascism*, 1 March 1932.

4 Document in John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

5 Arnold Leese, *Out of Step*, Guildford, 1951.

6 8th Earl of Glasgow, b. 1874. Had, as Commander Lord Kelburn, landed at Vladivostock in 1917 to succour British subjects. 'What he saw of Bolshevik brutality appalled him, and his horror of communism was to colour the next twenty years of his life, and led him into some indiscretions.' (*The Times* obituary, 16 Dec. 1963).

7 Brig.-Gen. Sir Ormonde Winter, KBE, CB, CMG, DSO, Deputy Chief of Police and Director of Intelligence, Ireland, 1920–2. Retired pay, 1924. In 1940 he was to go to Finland in the British contingent of the Internal Volunteer Force for Finland.

8 Former Conservative MP for Torquay. In 1925 changed his name to Sir Charles Forbes-Leith of Fyvie.

9 6th Marquess of Ailesbury, b. 1873. Good army career (dispatches) in South African and Great War.

10 Viscountess Downe, later BUF candidate for North Norfolk. A personal friend of Queen Mary.

11 Mary Cecil Frankland, widow of Sir Frederick Frankland. Succeeded her cousin in 1917, to become the 17th Baroness Zouche.

12 Fellow of All Souls. Ambassador to Spain 1913–19. Cousin of Lord Hardinge of Penhurst.

13 J. A. Cole, *Lord Haw-Haw – and William Joyce: The Full Story*, London, 1964.

14 A. K. Chesterton, *Oswald Mosley: Portrait of a Leader* [1937], p. 117.

15 'Moscow Influence in British Affairs', by Admiral W. E. R. Martin, *British Fascism*, Oct. 1930, p. 6.

16 'The Founder of British Fascism', *The Patriot*, 21 March 1935.

17 Benewick, op. cit., p. 35. Cross, op. cit., p. 61. Cross says that they claimed a membership of a million.

18 Benewick, op. cit., p. 35.

19 See John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library.

20 British Fascists: Manifesto (Constitutional and Political), 1 Oct. 1927. Document in John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library.

21 J. A. Cole: *Lord Haw-Haw, etc.*, pp. 32–3.

22 The changes mentioned by Cross appear to have taken place later than suggested, and, as we shall see, to have been of a different character.

23 Cross, op. cit., p. 62.

24 *British Fascism*, 1 March 1932.

25 Leaflet contained in *British Fascism* for March 1931.

26 ‘Hated by All Humanity’, translated by Capel Pownall. *British Fascism*, 1 Jan. 1932.
27 ‘A great – but stifled – problem. Gentiles and Jews’, *British Fascism*, 1 Jan 1932.
28 *British Fascism*, Feb. 1932, p. 4.
29 A. K. Chesterton, *Oswald Mosley: Portrait of a Leader*, London, 1937, p. 117.
30 See A. K. Chesterton, op. cit., p. 115.
31 ‘Who began Fascism in Great Britain’, *British Fascism*, 1 March 1932. Note the skilful use of the italicised word.
32 Skidelsky, op. cit., p. 291.
33 See photograph in *British Fascism*, Nov. 1931, at Armistice Day parade.
34 Indeed, Cole mistakenly believes that ‘it went out of business altogether’ (Cole, op. cit., p. 40).
35 *British Fascism*, Oct. 1932, p. 7.
36 *British Fascism*, Feb. 1933.
37 *The Patriot*, 9 Feb. 1933, p. 123.
38 *British Fascism*, Feb. 1933.
39 *British Fascism*, No. 1 (New Series), Aug. 1933, p. 1.
40 Ibid., p. 2.
41 *British Fascism*, March 1934, p. 1.
42 Ibid., pp. 4–5.
43 ‘Dictatorship’, by H.C.B.W., *British Fascism*, April 1934, pp. 1–4.
44 Ibid., pp. 4–5.
45 ‘Imperialism and Internationalism’, by H.C.B.W., *British Fascism*, May 1934, pp. 1–2.
46 ‘England – Stop! Look!! Think!!! Act!!!!’, by Hugh H. Wright, *British Fascism*, May 1934, pp. 2–4.
47 ‘Ourselves and the Imperial Fascist League’, by H.C.B.W., *British Fascism*, June 1934, p. 8.
48 *The Patriot*, 5 Sept. 1935.
49 Benewick, op. cit., p. 38.
50 Cross, *The Fascists in Britain*, London, 1961, p. 58.
51 Benewick, op. cit., p. 31.
52 *The Patriot*, 5 Sept. 1935.
53 A. K. Chesterton, *Oswald Mosley*, [1937], p. 117.
54 See Chapter 2.
55 Arnold Leese: *Out of Step: Events in the Two Lives of an Anti-Jewish Camel Doctor*, Guildford, 1951, p. 48.
56 Ibid., p. 50.
57 Ibid., p. 50.
58 Ibid., p. 49.
59 *The Fascist: The News Journal of the Imperial Fascist League*, March 1929.
60 Leese, op. cit., p. 49.
61 See *The Fascist*, March 1929.
62 Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley*, London, 1975, p. 291.
63 Leese, op. cit., p. 52.
64 Cross, op. cit., p. 119.
65 Leese, op. cit., p. 52.
66 Leese, op. cit., p. 52.
67 Benewick notes the similarities to *Der Stürmer*, and claims (pp. 45–6) that Leese visited Streicher, ‘for whom he expressed great admiration’, in Germany. Leese, however, later claimed that he had ‘never set foot in Germany’, and there appears to be little evidence for such a visit.
68 *The Fascist*, July 1936.
69 *Hansard*, 10 July and 30 July 1936.
70 Leese, *My Irrelevant Defence, being Meditations Inside Gaol and Out on Jewish Ritual Murder*, London, 1938, p. 1.
71 Leese, *Out of Step*, p. 55.
72 Cross, op. cit., p. 140.
73 Frederic Mullally, *Fascism inside England*, London, 1946, p. 21.
74 Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley*, London, 1975, p. 291.
75 Bruce Lockhart, *Diary*, 5 June 1933, (1, 257).
76 Seep. 317–8.
77 Bruce Lockhart, *Diary*, 5 June 1933 (1, 257).
78 *Das politische Tagebuch Alfred Rosenbergs*, entry for 14 May 1934.
79 *E.g.* the Bradford Branch (see *Hansard*, 10 July 1936).

80 Hutchison, *Truth*, [1936], p. 13.
81 Ibid., p. 19.
82 Ibid., p. 13.
83 Ibid., p. 12.
84 Quotation from Leaflet, *Don't send your son to the shambles of a Jew-made war*, quoted by Duchess of Atholl in H. of C. (*Hansard*, 10 July 1936).
85 *Hansard*, 10 July 1936.
86 Hutchison, *Truth*, p. 13.
87 Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley*, p. 380.
88 Op. cit., p. 291.
89 Mosley, in *Jewish Economic Forum*, 28 July 1933, quoted in Skidelsky, op. cit., p. 383.
90 Leese, *Out of Step*, p. 52.
91 Hutchison, *Truth*, p. 12.
92 *Manchester Guardian*, 16 Oct. 1933.
93 Skidelsky, op. cit., p. 390.
94 *The Blackshirt*, July 1934.
95 Cross, op. cit., p. 139.
96 Jacobsen, op. cit., p. 803.
97 *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 11 May 1935.
98 'The British Union of Fascists in Yorkshire 1934–1940', *Trevelyan Scholarship Project 1960*, unpublished MS, p. 2.
99 Ibid., p. 3.
100 Ibid., p. 10.

[4]

German Contacts, 1933–5

IN THE early years of Nazi rule in Germany, there were a number of propaganda efforts aimed directly at Great Britain. An examination of these initiatives will show us various groups within British society who, for widely differing reasons, were attracted to the idea of a closer relationship with Germany, or to admiration for the present German régime. The power of German propaganda must not be exaggerated; only too often the initiatives were ill-thought-out, or based on a misunderstanding of potential British reactions. This, however, makes an examination of those individuals who were attracted by it even more significant; it will be worth, after an initial examination of the various links, attempting in the next few chapters to assess the various types of motivation which attracted the British contacts, for it is hard to believe that they would have been affected by these particular types of propaganda, unless they had, in effect, been preconditioned to be so.

German propaganda efforts in relation to Great Britain had, of course, been in existence long before the advent of the Nazis to power, and it was one of the most long-standing of such links which was to have some particularly far-reaching effects in the thirties, mainly among an extremely high-minded and well-meaning part of the British community. As early as 1922, an unofficial German agency had been set up, entitled the *Wirtschaftpolitische Gesellschaft*, under Dr Margarete Gärtner. In the atmosphere of the twenties, where feelings of guilt, or of 'nagging doubt' about the Versailles treaty were so common among the British people,[1] Dr Gärtner's efforts met with considerable success. In 1929, an Anglo-German Association was set up under her aegis, and by 1933, as Watt tells us, 'she had succeeded in building links with both political parties in Britain, with the British press, and with most of the other organizations in Britain active in this hey-day of the promotion of international goodwill and understanding'.[2]

The change of régime in Germany made no difference to Dr Gärtner's efforts. Indeed, in her book *Botschafter des guten Willens*, published in 1955, the political question is not really considered. She was an 'ambassador', as the title of her book shows; and as a good servant of her country she continued to aim at a *rapprochement*, though some of the events in the first two years of Nazi rule made this particularly difficult.

It was in late 1933 that, under Dr Gärtner's influence, the Anglo-German Group was set up, under the chairmanship of Lord Allen of Hurtwood. This group, whose aim was to maintain good relations between the two countries, had a strong pacifist element to it, and most of its members (with one or two strong exceptions) stood to the centre or left of the political spectrum. Lord Allen, Lord Noel-Buxton, Charles Roden Buxton and Philip Noel-Baker were all prominent in the Labour Party; Horace Alexander, Corder Catchpool, Philip Noel-Baker, Carl Heath and Roden Buxton were Quakers and pacifists. Among other members of note were Sir Walter Layton, chairman of the *News Chronicle* and editor of *The Economist* (a leading Liberal), Vernon Bartlett, the broadcaster (who was to join the *News Chronicle* in 1934), Wilson Harris, editor of *The Spectator*, John Wheeler-Bennett of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, the Unionist MP Vyvyan Adams (a member of the executive of the League of Nations Union), and W. Arnold-Foster (of the League of Nations Union).

There can be no doubt that this group was entirely innocent in nature. Its members were fired by a concern for the maintenance of peace in the world, and for good relations between two major European countries. In the course of the early thirties, many of them were to become aware of the impossibility of forging such a relationship with Hitler's Germany, and to take up positions radically different from those that they were supporting in late 1933. Dr Gärtner's influence remained strong, however, both inside and outside the Anglo-German Group, with certain figures who remained at the centre of the stage as far as attempts at *rapprochement* were concerned.

Prominent among these were Lord Allen of Hurtwood and Lord Lothian, the Liberal peer, both of whom were to be leading apologists for Anglo-German understanding. There was also a rather shadowy figure who will re-emerge at almost every turn of our story: Philip Conwell-Evans, who had been Lord Noel-Buxton's private secretary when he had been a Minister in the Labour cabinet.

Dr Gärtner's mission had originally, as we have seen, pre-datedthe rise of the Nazi movement. Even before they came to power, the Nazis themselves set on foot certain activities to promote their interests abroad; and the major figure involved was Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi theorist, whose book *Der Mythus des 20 Jahrhunderts,* considered by many Nazis as second only to *Mein Kampf,* developed a mystical racial theory in which Europe's Nordic sources of power (Germany, Scandinavia and England) stood for white culture against the lesser breeds around them.

Rosenberg had visited London in November and December 1931, at the invitation of Squadron-Leader Winterbotham of Air Intelligence.[3] Jacobsen describes his aim as having been to make contact with 'politicians, journalists, officers and personalities of public life', and to counteract the 'horror stories' about the aims and methods of the Party, while stressing Germany's position as front-line defence against Bolshevism.[4] Winterbotham saw the whole thing as a low-key exercise: 'He was more or less unknown over here and it was unlikely that his presence would arouse any comment.'[5] Rosenberg did manage to have lunch with Dawson, the editor of *The Times,* and another with Oliver Locker-Lampson, MP, at the Savoy, and Winterbotham introduced him to Lord Apsley and a number of fliers, but his contacts were limited.

To understand German activities in Great Britain after the start of the Nazi régime in 1933, one must know a little about Hitler's machinery of government. In the foreign affairs field, as in others, there were various parallel lines of command, which could often be contradictory. Beside the state lines of command lay the party organisation; and within that organisation, if one section appeared to be becoming either too powerful or too inefficient, another section could be created to counterbalance it. Activities could be going on in the same area of concern at the same time, without the bodies that undertook them having much knowledge of each other's actions. The major lines of communication led to the Führer.

German activities in Great Britain in 1933–5 were mainly undertaken by Rosenberg and Ribbentrop. Rosenberg was the first head of the Nazi party's *Aussenpolitische Amt* (APA), the foreign policy section founded in April 1933. He thus became a parallel in the party to the Foreign Minister, Von Neurath. His duties were ill-defined, and publicly he was seen as leader of a kind of foreign information service, but the APA, which answered directly to Hitler, was intended to be a centre for foreign initiatives of various kinds. It was naturally very much suspected by the German Foreign Office; and rightly so, as it appears to have been the first of the many channels used to try to forge relationships with other countries without having to pass through the traditional diplomatic channels.

Hitler was strongly critical of the German Foreign Office, which in his view was far too bureaucratic and restricted. The APA was his first attempt to bypass it, but in the same year, 1933, he began to make use of one man, Ribbentrop, as a further emissary. At first this was in a very unofficial way, but by early 1934 the Foreign Ministers in London and Paris were secretly

informed that Ribbentrop had undertaken important tasks in those capitals, and was to be helped in any way that was needed.[6] Despite strong opposition from the Foreign Office, by April 1934 Ribbentrop had been appointed to the post of Commissioner for the Disarmament Question, responsible to the Foreign Minister. By 1935 Ribbentrop's 'Bureau' (Dienststelle) had almost entirely displaced Rosenberg's APA in importance.

By the nature of things, of course, our knowledge of such secret contacts as were made by both Rosenberg and Ribbentrop is fragmentary, and depends upon the availability of memoirs, diaries and documents. A pattern nevertheless emerges: Ribbentrop was above all concerned with direct contact with politicians of importance, and the bypassing of official Foreign Office channels, which, on both sides of the North Sea, appeared to be counter-productive. Rosenberg, through a series of secret contacts, was also aiming at influence upon those in power, and at the selling of the Nazi Party's public relations; but his circle was wider, and his contacts, particularly in Air Force circles, of considerable importance in relation to questions of rearmament.

Rosenberg's disastrous visit to London in May 1933 was no doubt one of the reasons for Ribbentrop to have been brought in as the man to make direct contacts at high level. Rosenberg had arrived amid public anxiety and dislike for what had been seen of the aims and methods of the Nazi party. He was the wrong man to have sent; he was known as the main party ideologist, whose theories were at the base of much that was disliked. Above all, he was completely tactless. Without consulting the German Embassy, he publicly placed a large swastika wreath at the Cenotaph. This was removed and thrown into the Thames by a former British army officer (*not*, as German sources suggest, by 'people belonging to Socialist circles')[7] who was later fined 40s.[8] Reports of the lack of success of Rosenberg's visit[9] led to an interesting interview between Hitler and the British ambassador, Sir Horace Rumbold, on 11 May, in which the latter pointed out that there had been an unmistakable swing in public opinion in England, based on the British concepts of freedom of the individual and consideration for other races,[10] which were diametrically opposed to the Nazi view. This led to a Hitler bluster about the role of the Jews in recent German history, and the need for the British to join in the fight against Communism.

During his visit, however, Rosenberg had made some apparently useful contacts. The way had in some respects been prepared for him by his main British expert, Baron William de Ropp, former *Times* political correspondent in Berlin. A naturalised Englishman of Baltic German origins, Ropp appears to have been a highly successful double agent. On the one hand, he was a 'close friend and colleague' of Squadron-Leader Winterbotham, who despite being 'listed in the Air Force List as a member of the Air Staff', was in fact Chief of Air Intelligence of the Secret Intelligence Service.[11] On the other, he was Rosenberg's 'Vertrauensmann'.[12] As Winterbotham put it, 'Bill became a close confidant of Rosenberg and this, in turn, led to Bill's advice being sought by Hitler on the subject of English reactions to the Nazis … So well did Bill play his part that he was taken on by Rosenberg as his "English Agent".'[13] In this position he kept Winterbotham 'well informed of such political aims and objectives as fell from the lips of Rosenberg and, latterly, of Hitler himself'.[14] Winterbotham himself, through this and other German contacts, gained information on German Air Force developments and plans, the results of which were embodied in various appreciations prepared for the Committee of Imperial Defence and its sub-committees, notably the Committee on Air Parity which in effect fathered the RAF expansion scheme of March 1935.

On the other hand, it is quite clear that Ropp to some extent, wittingly or unwittingly, served German ends. Ropp may, or may not, have been the convinced Nazi that he appeared in Berlin; but he was able to open to the Nazis channels through which they could feed propaganda as to Nazi aims. Winterbotham, in his Memoirs, quotes Rosenberg's diary entry on the matter: 'When there are anti-German activities in London, enquiries always come to us from the Air General Staff as to

what reply could be made to favour the German standpoint. The German arguments have then been turned to good account wherever appropriate … This firm group in the Air General Staff, led principally by younger officers, showed itself to be firm and keenly aware of its goals in all uncertain situations.'[15] Winterbotham also points out that 'admittedly' de Ropp 'took money from both the Nazis and ourselves', and that 'he did from time to time inform Rosenberg of people who had been either talking or writing in favour of the Nazi Party in England; the German Embassy would then get in touch with these people and invite them to Berlin'.[16] This had always been one of Rosenberg's main aims.

Rosenberg, on his 1933 visit to London, made contact with official circles (Sir John Simon, Lord Hailsham, Sir Robert Vansittart, etc.), but had made little headway with them. It was Ropp who, by introducing him to an old club acquaintance, made something of a breakthrough. This was Alan Barlow,[17] Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald.[18] For the next couple of years Barlow was a useful intermediary, passing information and explanation from the APA direct to MacDonald.

MacDonald had already shown some sympathy for Germany's position. His comments to the German Ambassador in April 1933 showed that 'he had not believed the reports of excesses and moreover he understood very well the character of and circumstances attending a revolution'. He nevertheless expressed fears 'lest young Germany's "desire for action" might not "in the end" be imposed on the Government'.[19] By November, Gilbert and Gott note, 'MacDonald's doubts had been dispelled.' He developed, in conversation with Hoesch, a plan for *détente*, which the Cabinet knew nothing about. The Germans, he felt, 'were not to be treated as renegades on account of the internal affairs of the régime'. The plan was that Hitler should visit England, where he would get a very friendly reception. Hoesch, remembering Rosenberg's reception in May, noted on his report on this conversation the one word: 'Absurd!'[20]

We will never know the extent to which the Rosenberg–Ropp–Barlow link brought about these views in MacDonald. Certainly, in the next few years, Conwell-Evans worked through MacDonald, until 'Lothian … persuaded him that Ramsay cut no ice'.[21] It is also interesting to note that, in early 1934, MacDonald was to confide to Sir John Reith 'that he was not trusted in the FO, and that there had even been suggestions that he had been suborned by the Nazis'.[22]

Ribbentrop's first major visit to London was in November 1933. Ernest Tennant, a British merchant banker whose business activities took him to Germany a great deal in the years 1932–6, had met Ribbentrop in 1932, and formed a close friendship with him. During 1933 Tennant was a considerable apologist for the Nazi movement, writing in April an article in the *English Review* entitled 'Herr Hitler and his Policy, March 1933', and speaking on Hitler in August at Ashridge Conservative College (at the week-end conference which included Petrie on Mussolini and Bruce Lockhart on Lenin). Throughout this year he had frequent meetings with Ribbentrop, often staying at his house in Dahlem.[23]

After Tennant's speech at Ashridge, J. C. C. Davidson, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, had asked for some typed notes to send to Mr Baldwin.[24] 'He seemed well-informed, and to have good contacts with the new régime in Germany', wrote Davidson, 'so I made it my business to ask him for his notes and sent them to S.B.'[25] This appears to have set off an idea in either Tennant's or Ribbentrop's mind. Early in November, Tennant approached Davidson and asked him to arrange a private meeting between Ribbentrop and Baldwin. This led to a luncheon party at Davidson's house on 20 November.

Ribbentrop spoke of Hitler's desire for peace, and his 'desire to establish permanent friendship with Britain'.[26] Davidson noted, however, 'his defiant attitude on German rearmament'.[27] That afternoon, Ribbentrop was invited to 10 and 11 Downing Street, where he also met Ramsay

MacDonald.

Though Ribbentrop 'had the feeling of an agreeable personal relationship' with Baldwin, whom he saw as a 'typical representative of English conservatism,'[28] and though Tennant reports Baldwin as saying of Ribbentrop 'I am glad you arranged this, I like that man, I like his face,'[29] Davidson's own contemporary account of the meeting shows Baldwin's reactions in a very different light. 'S.B., never really at his best with foreigners, did not really take to Ribbentrop,'[30] he noted.

Ribbentrop, true to his concept of personal diplomacy, had suggested 'a private visit to Berlin by Mr Baldwin, as representing to the German mind the typically British outlook'.[31] As we shall see on several occasions, Baldwin did not subscribe to the 'man-to-man' concept of diplomacy, and believed it should be conducted through the proper channels. Later, in 1936, when as Prime Minister he was faced by repeated requests for a 'summit' with Hitler, we shall see him perpetually procrastinating, and eventually referring the matter to the ministers concerned.

On this occasion, though 'Tennant pressed Davidson eagerly over the next week about the visit to Berlin', and though he brought from Germany, in December, a verbal invitation from Hitler, Baldwin was 'reluctant to consider it'; he eventually agreed to send Davidson and Geoffrey Lloyd. The visit was fixed for 15 January, but after Davidson had withdrawn Tennant brought a message saying that Hitler was 'displeased that only Lloyd was going and wished for a personal message from Baldwin'.[32] This Baldwin declined to give, and referred him to the Foreign Office.

In early February Tennant suggested another meeting, and on the 11th Tennant and Ribbentrop turned up at Davidson's house, Ribbentrop declaring that he was anxious to see Baldwin, as he had a letter from Hitler for him.[33] Although Ribbentrop saw Baldwin next day, Baldwin had prudently invited the Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, to be present, which meant that Ribbentrop felt himself unable to pass on Hitler's message to Baldwin 'since he had not seen him alone'. Ribbentrop grasped, at this stage, that 'Mr Baldwin probably does not wish to discuss Germany privately with him, but prefers to leave this to Sir John Simon and Anthony Eden.'[34]

Tennant, who describes Ribbentrop's visit as containing successive blows to his vanity, blamed Baldwin's attitude on 'fear … of the Foreign Office', which must have stepped in after the first visit. He described a visit to Baldwin at which the latter 'got quite upset and said that I must leave immediately as the Foreign Secretary was due at any moment, and I must not be found in the room. I thought for one moment that Mr Baldwin was going to ask me to hide in a cupboard'.[35]

Far more likely, however, is that Baldwin, like Barthou (who told Ribbentrop so with considerable sarcasm), believed that international relations were the domain of those to whom they had been entrusted.[36] Added to this, Davidson and Baldwin had been assailed with much pro-German propaganda in late 1933 and early 1934, particularly from Philip Conwell-Evans, and had realised the nature of much of it. 'I am gradually becoming converted to the view', wrote Davidson to Baldwin as he sent some of it on to him, 'that Germany is opening her mouth very wide, backed by a chorus of well-meaning and enthusiastic agents. The underlined passages are childishly naïve.'[37] Baldwin's view of such attempts at 'summitry' was that they were potentially dangerous, and that the Foreign Office had to be a party to any initiative.

Ribbentrop had, of course, kept up many relationships with people whom he considered to be of importance in Great Britain. Many of them were invited to stay at his house in Germany, and returned as resolute propagandists. In 1935 his contacts with Lord Lothian, for example, were many.

Meanwhile Rosenberg's contacts in the field of aviation appeared to him to be flourishing. Winterbotham visited Germany 'On leave' from 2 February to 3 March 1934, bringing greetings from British fliers to the Führer;[38] he had a long talk with Hitler, in the presence of Rosenberg,

General von Reichenau, Bruno Loerzer (head of the 'Deutscher Luftsportverband') and Hess. The discussion was concerned with the RAF and with Anglo-German relations.[39]

This led to a visit, in May, by Captain Ken Bartlett, chief of the overseas sales branch of the Bristol Aircraft Company.[40] Bartlett came with a letter of introduction from Winterbotham. He declared his intention 'to construct the new, still secret engine here'. Rosenberg laid on, for him, a working breakfast at which the construction chiefs of the German Army, Navy and Air Ministry took part. He saw it as the result of one and a half years' hard work, at the end of which the British Air General Staff was officially giving its approval for the build-up of German air defence.[41]

Winterbotham's memoirs *'Secret and Personal'* (1969) give the true explanation of these events. The whole thing, explains Winterbotham, was rigged up in order to get information about the German secret air force build-up. 'We cooked up the idea that if we made de Ropp the Bristol agent in Berlin, and if he in turn could suggest to Rosenberg that Britain might be ready to agree to manufacture by Germany of the latest (not quite) Bristol engines still on the secret list, the bait might let Bartlett into the circle of German aviation specialists … I got the Air Ministry technical branch to play along and I think the best evidence of our success comes from the published diaries of Rosenberg himself.'[42]

Meanwhile Bruno Loerzer had been having a very successful visit to London, where he had stayed with Winterbotham's cousin,[43] Lindsay Everard, MP.[44] Loerzer, though ostensibly concerned with civil aviation, was really responsible for the training of the new pilots for the embryonic Luftwaffe. Some of these pilots, at Winterbotham's suggestion,[45] accompanied Loerzer on this visit. Through the good offices of Sir Nigel Norman, principal organiser of private flying clubs in England (who had met Rosenberg on his first visit to England,[46] and who owned Heston aerodrome), the German pilots were invited to Heston. On their arrival they were given a cocktail party by the Guards Flying Club; and at a lunch the next day at the RAF club in London, attended by 'as many German-speaking young English civil pilots' as Winterbotham could muster, Winterbotham 'only managed just in time to stop one of the English enthusiasts proposing a toast to the new Luftwaffe'.[47]

In September, Captain Bartlett returned to Germany, to announce that the RAF would support German air forces, without there being any need for the Foreign Office to be informed. Rosenberg noted that his own Air Ministry had 'rather cold feet' over this, and wanted official British confirmation of this promised support. (Hardly surprising, in a year when German rearmament was such a crucial question!) Rosenberg's reaction was that they were 'rather naïve', and that his next move should be to place before them the official papers he had had from the British Air Ministry.[48]

It was not just with aviation circles that the APA had contacts. Rosenberg (like Ribbentrop later) invited his own British guests to the 1934 *Parteitag*. Among them were three whom, rightly or wrongly, he considered to be of specific importance.

The first of these was the Ven. J. Hodson, Archdeacon of Gloucester. Rosenberg had a very interesting talk with this 'friend of the Bishop of Gloucester'. Hodson had expected to find in Rosenberg some kind of wild 'Antichrist', but to his astonishment found a man like any other. Their long conversation made a great impression on him, and later, at a public meeting in Gloucester, he gave witness to this impression.[49] Writing to Rosenberg afterwards, Hodson said that he hoped to send his Bishop over; and in early 1935 Rosenberg was in correspondence with the Bishop of Gloucester,[50] who had already made his sympathy for Nazi Germany clear as early as 1933.[51]

Another important visitor was a Colonel McCaw,[52] who came as a 'private person', but was in reality a political adviser at the British War Ministry. 'In the course of a long talk he said that the

Versailles Treaty had been a crime, Wilson was an idiot, and Lloyd George an ignoramus. People *must* get together in the foreseeable future, to set up a new order of things.' McCaw was determined to come back soon to Germany, to take serious soundings. Indeed, he returned on 25 October. Rosenberg saw him as being of importance in that he could work for closer Anglo-German co-operation in 'Hailsham's circle, which is decidedly not friendly to Germany.'[53]

The third of Rosenberg's 'important' guests was Captain Fitzroy Hubert Fyers,[54] equerry to the Duke of Connaught. In July Fyers had been one of Obermüller's contacts in London. Rosenberg noted that, on his return to England, Fyers had been able to inform the Royal Family about the Nuremberg Rally. Fyers then wrote to Rosenberg to ask for confidential information about the background to the Roehm purge. Before sending a memorandum on this, Rosenberg had it vetted by Hitler. Rosenberg hoped that it would 'perhaps prevent the King from being affected by inflammatory reports, since, as I learn from authentic sources in London, the British Ambassador in Berlin, Phipps, has reported that there was no plot of any kind, and that Hitler had merely wished to get rid of some awkward people'.[55]

It is fairly certain that Rosenberg's contacts were not half as important as he believed; it is nevertheless clear that he regarded the purveying of information to those in influential circles to be one of his most important functions. In this connexion certain events in early 1935 are of considerable interest.

In mid-January Baron de Ropp came to Rosenberg with secret information, for Rosenberg and the Führer only. The Saar plebiscite had taken place on 13 January, and had resulted in a 90·65% vote for Germany. 'His Majesty the King of England', reported de Ropp, 'has expressed to his political adviser his extreme astonishment that England had been so badly informed about the true situation in the Saar.' The adviser in question had turned to the Air Ministry, to ask for more immediate information about the situation in Germany. Winterbotham had thereupon called de Ropp, and asked him to come to London. The plan was for de Ropp to meet the King's adviser in a London club, and to convey to him all that was necessary about the whole Nazi movement. De Ropp set off for London on 20 January.[56]

De Ropp returned on 2 February, with the astonishing news that the 'King's adviser' had turned out to be the Duke of Kent. He had met de Ropp at a ball, and then had a private conversation with him until 3 a.m. The Duke of Kent had declared the King's wish to get to know the *mentality* of the leading Nazi personalities. 'What was Hitler like? Hess? Rosenberg?' De Ropp described them at length.[57]

It is hard to assess this evidence. Clearly the Duke of Kent *did* approach the Air Ministry, and clearly de Ropp *did* meet him. But was the King behind it all? George V's reaction to the Prince of Wales's speech to the British Legion seems to show not only that he felt that the Royal Family should not interfere in foreign affairs, but also that he felt their need to stick to the Foreign Office line in such matters. It is most unlikely that George V would have had any wish to have secret communication with secret agents. The Duke of Kent, on the other hand, of whom Bruce Lockhart noted in 1937 that he was 'strong in German camp',[58] may have been indulging in his own curiosity, ascribing it to the King. Whichever was the case, there is no suggestion, and no evidence, that de Ropp's interview had any effect on the attitudes of the Monarchy.

By the beginning of 1935, Rosenberg's influence in foreign affairs was waning, and Ribbentrop was taking over the main activity in this sphere. In one respect, however, their policies were a continuity: the importance of inviting leading British personalities to Germany to meet Hitler. In early 1935 Rosenberg was intending to invite Lloyd George;[59] in 1936 Ribbentrop and Conwell-Evans succeeded in arranging the visit. At the same time as Rosenberg had been arranging visits, Ribbentrop had had, among other guests, Lord Mottistone, the chairman of the Air League, in

1933, and Sir Arnold Wilson, MP, in 1934. Through Ribbentrop's influence Hitler himself was, by the end of 1934, persuaded to act as host on some of these occasions. The first dinner-party given by Hitler was on 19 December 1934. The guests of honour were Lord Rothermere, Esmond Harmsworth, George Ward Price (foreign correspondent of the *Daily Mail*) and E. W. D. Tennant.[60]

Ribbentrop's methods were far more subtle, and far more effective, than those of Rosenberg, as far as British public opinion was concerned. He soon came to the conclusion that one of the strongest strings on which to play, for the British public, was the question of ex-service solidarity; and from this stemmed the extensive involvement of the British Legion in Anglo-German relationships. Through Tennant, he made many contacts in the British business fraternity, and helped to set up the Anglo-German Fellowship and its German counterpart the *Deutsch—Englische Gesellschaft.* Visits by prominent British people were organised through the *Deutsch-Europäischer Kulturbund.* Above all, the question of visitors to the *Parteitag* was organised on a far greater scale, though in some respects rather more impersonally. In September 1935, for example, the German press attaché in London asked Bruce Lockhart to find English people to go to the *Parteitag,* offering 'free trips, etc., for any journalist or politician.'[61]

One must not, of course, exaggerate Ribbentrop's innovations. People had been coming to Nuremberg, and going away impressed, for the last couple of years. And Goebbels had been seeing to it that all available means of German propaganda were used in print. British writers and journalists were paid to produce favourable reports. Graham Seton Hutchison, for example; though he would have needed little encouragement so to do. Clifford Sharp, the former editor of the *New Statesman,* who had for some years been going to the dogs (Bruce Lockhart, time and again, in his diary referred to the fact that he was 'drinking himself to death',[62] 'near his end in more senses than one',[63] etc.) was, in April 1933, with 'no money and his nerves gone', prepared to 'go to Berlin and write up Hitler. The German Government will pay'.[64] In this particular case, the German Government had chosen wrongly. 'He cost them £100 and then could not place an article in any paper.'[65] A considerable amount of writing was, however, subsidised more efficiently in these years, and there was also the publication of a number of German works, particularly by the firm of Hurst and Blackett, which produced Hitler's *My Struggle (Mein Kampf)* in 1933, and Heinz A. Heinz's *Germany's Hitler* and Friedrich Glombowski's *For the Fatherland* in 1934. Heinz's book, a tireless eulogy of Hitler, ended with the enthusiastic words: 'Later generations will consider the period of Marxian Socialism as an interlude out of which purgatory the world emerged into the truer and beneficent conception of – ADOLF HITLER.'[66]

To these German books of propaganda we must add a number of books by British enthusiasts, and in particular Michael Fry's *Hitler's Wonderland* (1934), which went as far as suggesting that 'there is a magnetic fluid emanating from Hitler which seems supernatural'.[67] James Murphy, later translator of *Mein Kampf,* produced a book for Chapman and Hall entitled *Adolf Hitler* in 1934. Murphy was for four years, from 1934 to 1938, an official of the German Propaganda Ministry in Berlin.

One of the most fertile areas of German propaganda, however, was among schoolchildren. This was two-pronged, being partly carried out by school visits to Germany, partly by the provision of the right kind of textbooks for those studying German. Perhaps the most blatant example of the latter was the school textbook published in 1935 in the Harrap's 'Plain Texts in German' series. It was entitled *Adolf Hitler – Der Führer des deutschen Reiches. A Short Account of his Life and Work,* and was written by Kurt Schulze, a Magdeburg schoolmaster, and H. E. Lewington, the German master at the John Ruskin School, Croydon. The text consisted of a tremendously idealised life of Hitler (involving his childhood, and noble deeds defending other children against

bullies, etc.) followed by a description of the Nazi movement and its success. Something of the taste of it can be given by the following passage (originally in German):

> The new *Weltanschauung* permeates all spheres of life, and everyone recognizes that National Socialism has not brought a change of government or of system, but a complete renewal of the conception of life. One can confirm with pride that the whole Revolution took its course bloodlessly, thanks to the outstanding discipline of the troops.[68]

As far as school visits to Germany were concerned, it is worth noting a conversation in 1936 between Harold Nicolson and Dr Robert Birley, Head Master of Charterhouse. Discussing German propaganda, Nicolson remarked that 'the Germans appeal to the adolescent whereas the French appeal to the adult'. Birley replied 'that this is all very true, but that the adolescent at Charterhouse seldom goes abroad again and that his whole impressions of Europe are derived from that trip to Germany which he took in his last year at school and which was neatly arranged for him by Herr Goebbels'.[69]

These, then, were some of the many methods used by the Germans in the years 1933–5 to impress the British public with the new régime in Germany. As we have seen, British reactions in these early years were on the whole hostile, particularly in 1934; but there were also a considerable number of 'takers' of varying degrees of enthusiasm, and it is their various forms of motivation which we will now proceed to examine.

1 See Martin Gilbert, *The Roots of Appeasement*, London, 1966, *passim*.
2 D. C. Watt, *Personalities and Policies*, London, 1965, p. 117.
3 F. W. Winterbotham, *Secret and Personal*, London, 1969, p. 25.
4 Hans Adolf Jacobsen, *Nationalsozialistische Aussenpolitik 1933–1938*, Berlin, 1968, p. 73. Jacobsen establishes convincingly the date of the visit (which is placed later in Winterbotham's account).
5 Winterbotham, op. cit., p. 25.
6 See Jacobsen, op. cit., p. 253.
7 Jacobsen, op. cit., p. 75.
8 Bruce Lockhart, entry for 11 May 1933, p. 254.
9 Zeman describes it as 'a dismal failure'. Z.A.B. Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda*, Oxford, 1964, p. 144.
10 Jacobsen, op. cit., p. 336.
11 Winterbotham, op. cit., p. 29.
12 Jacobsen, op. cit., p. 73.
13 Winterbotham, op. cit., p. 24, p. 27.
14 Ibid., p. 27.
15 Winterbotham, op. cit., p. 79
16 Winterbotham, *The Nazi Connection*, London, 1978, p. 24.
17 James Alan Barlow, knighted in 1938. Principal Private Secretary to Ramsay MacDonald for two years, 1933–4.
18 Jacobsen, op. cit., p. 75.
19 Gilbert and Gott, op. cit., p. 37, based on Hoesch to Foreign Ministry, 12 April 1933.
20 Gilbert and Gott, op. cit., p. 37, based on Hoesch to Foreign Ministry, 10 Nov. 1933.
21 Tom Jones, *Diary*, 4 Sept. 1936.
22 *The Reith Diaries*, London, 1975, entry for 2 Feb. 1934 (p. 117).
23 E. W. D. Tennant, *True Account*, London, 1957, pp. 151–63.
24 Ibid., p. 159.
25 Quoted in Robert Rhodes James, *Memoirs of a Conservative: J. C. C. Davidson's Memoirs and Papers 1910–37*, London, 1969, p. 399.
26 *The Ribbentrop Memoirs*, London, 1954, p. 36.
27 Rhodes James, op. cit., p. 399.
28 *The Ribbentrop Memoirs*, London, 1954, p. 36.
29 E. W. D. Tennant, *True Account*, London, 1957, p. 164.

30 Rhodes James, op. cit., p. 399.
31 Davidson papers, quoted in Barnes and Middlemas, *Baldwin: A Biography*, London, 1969, p. 749.
32 Barnes and Middlemas, op. cit., pp. 749–50.
33 Rhodes James, op. cit., p. 400–1.
34 Quoted in Barnes and Middlemas, op. cit., p. 751.
35 Tennant, op. cit., p. 169.
36 Jacobsen, op. cit., p. 254.
37 Quoted in Rhodes James, op. cit., p. 400.
38 *Das politische Tagebuch Alfred Rosenbergs*, Göttingen, 1956. Entry for 14 May 1934. See also Winterbotham, *The Nazi Connection*, p. 37.
39 Jacobsen, op. cit., p. 785.
40 Winterbotham, op. cit., p. 28.
41 *Das politische Tagebuch Alfred Rosenbergs.* Entry for 14 May, 1934.
42 Winterbotham, op. cit., p. 28.
43 Rosenberg, op. cit., entry for 17 May 1934.
44 Unionist MP for Melton since 1924. Chairman of Flying Clubs Association.
45 Winterbotham, *The Nazi Connection,* p. 93.
46 Ibid., p. 34.
47 Ibid., p. 102.
48 Rosenberg, op. cit., entry for end of September 1934.
49 Rosenberg, op. cit., entry for end of September 1934.
50 Ibid., entry for 15 Jan. 1935.
51 See pp. 76, 176.
52 Probably Captain George McCaw of the War Office.
53 Rosenberg, op. cit., entry for end of September 1934.
54 Wrongly spelt ‘Captain Fyans’ in the published edition of Rosenberg’s diary, and in Jacobsen.
55 Rosenberg, op. cit., entry for end of September 1934.
56 Ibid., entry for 21 Jan. 1935.
57 Ibid., entry for 2 Feb. 1935.
58 Bruce Lockhart diaries, entry for 14 Oct. 1937.
59 Rosenberg, op. cit., entry for 2 Feb. 1935.
60 See Tennant, op. cit., p. 184, and Ward Price, *I Know These Dictators*, London, 1938, p. 30.
61 Bruce Lockhart diaries, entry for 5 Sept. 1935.
62 Bruce Lockhart diaries, 22 March 1929.
63 Ibid., 15 Dec. 1932.
64 Ibid., 19 April 1933.
65 Ibid., 5 June 1933.
66 Heinz A. Heinz, *Germany’s Hitler*, London, 1934, p. 284.
67 Michael Fry, *Hitler’s Wonderland*, p. 106.
68 Schulze & Lewington, *Adolf Hitler*, London, 1935, p. 49.
69 Harold Nicolson’s *Diaries*, Vol. I, entry for 10 Dec. 1936.

[5]

Some Areas of Pro-Germanism

IN THIS period there were certain areas of British life where, to greater or lesser extent, some sympathy for the new Germany existed. A complex series of emotions lay behind this sympathy, and it could range from a mere desire for understanding to a wholesale acceptance of Nazism on its own terms. Some idea of the impossibility of making simple generalisations on this matter will be shown by the four areas of opinion which make up this chapter. If each group was capable of producing people who were pro-German, and some of whom were pro-Nazi, each was also capable of producing people who were violently anti-Nazi, or people who were merely indifferent. And the variety of attitudes was matched by an even greater variety of motives.

Ex-servicemen and the British Legion

One of the strongest cards which the Nazis had to play was the sense of comradeship felt by those who had fought in the First World War, even on opposing sides. Many of the Nazi leaders were ex-servicemen with strong military records, the most outstanding one being Goering, the air ace. The Nazis could cast themselves as military men taking over from politicians, straightforward men who understood other straightforward men, warriors who believed in peace. A speech made by Goering to the Krupps workers at Essen in December 1934 gives us the style and content of much of this propaganda, directed at Britain and France. A British politician, Boothby, had said only a few days before that an unarmed unprotected country was in danger of war. ‘Let him realise’, said Goering, ‘that what is true for England is also true for Germany.’ Germany wanted to ensure peace; but for this they needed arms, like other countries. They needed the same rights as others:

> But we know that even for other peoples the hour will come for that true understanding which is only possible between partners of equal strength, and never possible between the strong and the weak. We see the same thing time and again: the front-line soldiers of all nations, who have taken part in that mighty struggle, speak the same language, and understand each other. Why? Because they have learned to respect each other. One cannot tell the French front-line soldier, who had to fight for four years against Germany, that the Boche are cowardly dogs. He has the experience of whether we are cowardly dogs or not. He knows definitely that it is not true. He knows that with this people one can and must come to an understanding. But then along come the ‘politicians’ (*Politikaster*) and the ‘pettifogging lawyers’ (*Rechtsverdreher*), and think that they can uproot this healthy, virtuous thought. Just talk with a French front-line man, with a French soldier! He will grasp the need for understanding between the great nations.[1]

The most obvious group of people to be affected by this kind of talk in Great Britain was, of course, the British Legion. In the summer of 1934, just after the Roehm purge, a group of ex-servicemen visiting Königsberg were given a speech by Rudolf Hess which was to be of considerable influence. This speech, while incidentally praising Hitler’s action against Roehm, had as its main theme an appeal for an alliance for universal peace. The translator present was James

Murphy, already working for the German Propaganda Ministry. He saw the potential of the speech, and had his translation printed as a pamphlet.

'Did it have any effect? Certainly it did. Let me take one instance alone. Leading members of the British Legion received the pamphlet and reacted enthusiastically.'[2]

In Murphy's view, the 'peace campaign' which started in this way was Hitler's reaction to the shock felt in other countries at the Roehm purge. Certainly, it was from now on that the ex-service card was most assiduously played, though the reason for it may well have been Ribbentrop's ascendancy, and his acute sense of what could be effective.

At the beginning of 1935, Ribbentrop arranged for an intermediary (Corder Catchpool, Head of the Quaker Office in Berlin), to approach Colonel George Crosfield, of the British Legion, suggesting that they should send a delegation to Germany, to meet the 'Frontkämpferbund', and that the visit should be reciprocated. To be fair to Crosfield, he 'cleared the project with Anthony Eden, on March 1st, before replying'. Eden declared that the Foreign Office had no objection to such contact, but warned Crosfield that they must beware of being used for propaganda, and of the propaganda that would be turned on them.

The Prince of Wales was the Patron of the British Legion, and was due to speak at its Annual Conference on 11 June. The visit to Germany had been fixed for early July. Before the conference, Crosfield approached the Prince, asking him to refer to the impending visit in his speech.

The Prince's speech at the conference was, if taken in a vacuum, fairly innocuous. He praised the idea of a British Legion visit to Germany, and commented: 'I feel that there could be no more suitable body or organisation of men to stretch forth the hand of friendship to the Germans than we ex-service men, who fought them and have now forgotten all about it and the Great War.'

In the circumstances, however, the Prince's action can only be seen as either naïve or perverse. The propaganda value to Germany was enormous, and it was headlined throughout the German press. The Prince may well have shared many of the attitudes of those he was addressing, but he must have realised that anything he said was bound to take on an official character. The King sent for him, and reproved him, pointing out that he had expressed views that were contrary to Foreign Office policy, and that no comments were ever to be made on controversial matters without consulting the Government. The Prince's reaction was typical: at a Court Ball on the 13th he 'seemed in a very bad temper but looked about twelve'.[3] During the ball he had a long conversation with Hoesch, the German ambassador, in which he said that he was 'not retracting and was convinced that he had said the right thing'.[4]

The British Legion visit to Germany started on 13 July. It had been preceded by a visit of the Deutsche Frontkämpfer to England, from 20 to 25 June. The delegates included Major F. Fetherston-Godley (the National Chairman), Colonel Crosfield, Captain M. A. Hawes, RN (former Naval Attaché in Berlin), and Major Jack Cohen (Hon. Treasurer). They were received by Hitler on 15 July, and talked with him for nearly two hours. 'He asked each of them to tell him in detail on which sector of the front he had fought, and exchanged war-memories with the visitors. But for the difference in language it might have been a typical meeting of old comrades.' Hitler's final speech made his political point. 'After expressing his hearty pleasure at the visit, he emphasised the special value he attached, in the interests of peace, to collaboration between soldiers who had fought in the last war.'[5]

After a visit to Dachau, the visitors were treated to a 'quiet family supper with Herr Himmler', who gave them 'the impression of being an unassuming man anxious to do his best for his country'.[6] This was the first of many British Legion visits to Germany.

What were the reactions of the delegation, as a whole? They certainly appear to have taken very little notice of Eden's advice on the danger of being used for propaganda. Murphy noted that

‘our delegates persistently harped on the theme of Hess’s speech and even adopted Hess’s phraseology.’ They ‘declared at public functions throughout Germany that Britain’s war against Germany had been a colossal blunder. They assured their German hosts that this blunder would never be allowed to occur again. The Nazi Press took up the refrain and the Nazi *Overseas Telegraph Agency – Transozean* – cabled it gratis to the newspapers in every civilised and half-civilised country all over the globe.’[7]

This is backed up by the evidence of Hitler’s interpreter, Paul Schmidt, who noted that at a breakfast for the English visitors just before the 15 July reception, Major Fetherston-Godley had said ‘that the English had only once fought against the Germans, and that in the opinion of the British Legion this had been a mistake – a mistake that should[8] not be repeated. He now spoke in similar terms to Hitler.’[9]

Their views on Anglo-German relations may have been indiscreet, but what of their impressions of Nazi Germany? Schmidt, writing after the war, suggests that while ‘these visitors undoubtedly felt much impressed by the manner in which Hitler had received them’, this impression ‘faded out as time went by’. As he accompanied them on the next few days of their visit, he noticed ‘how their attitude to Germany became daily more critical’, and how what they saw ‘seemed to confirm what they had heard about Germany in their own country, rather than what Hitler and his colleagues had told them so persuasively’.

This is, of course, perfectly possible, and individual members of the delegation may have had this attitude. What remains certain is that Crosfield’s later statements betray an uncritical admiration for Germany’s internal policies, and a strong belief in the sincerity of Hitler and his colleagues. In relation to an international congress of ex-Combatant Associations in Berlin in 1937, he gave his impressions as follows, in a newspaper interview:

> The men and women of the people had been full of enjoyment and good cheer. In their laughter and in their eyes one could read that a strong, new and healthy spirit was growing upon Germany.
>
> Colonel Crosfield was greatly impressed by the speeches made to the ex-combatants by Göring, Blomberg and Hess. All three had been ‘first-class’. Each one of those representatives of the Reich had spoken as an ex-combatant to ex-combatants, in a way that men who had fought in the trenches can understand particularly well …
>
> Colonel Crosfield praised highly the compelling sincerity of the Führer’s address to the delegates.[10]

Crosfield’s expressed views appear to belie Wootton’s words, in the *Official History of the British Legion*, where he admits that the German Military Attaché in London was right in describing British Legion attitudes as ‘pro-German’, but attempts to distinguish between this and being ‘pro-Fascist’ [*sic*], adding that ‘the attitude of British ex-service men generally in no way implied admiration for the new régime in Germany’.[11] Clearly some important Legion members, including Crosfield, did have such admiration. Others, of course, did not, but Wootton makes it clear that critics of Germany’s treatment of the Jews were ‘unorganised’ and ‘few in number’, and mainly ‘Jewish members of the Legion’.[12] A Jewish resolution on this subject was rejected for discussion by the Standing Orders Committee.

Within the British Legion leadership, those who were not admirers of Nazi Germany were, on the whole, prepared to take the view we have already seen in our chapter on anti-Semitism: Germany’s internal policies were her own affair, and should not be allowed to interfere with the more important business of Anglo-German relations. ‘We cannot condone many things that happen in these countries’, said Major Fetherston-Godley in March 1936, ‘but their domestic affairs are

not our business. Our business is to try and create something that will help the peace of the world.'[13]

Other prominent members of the British Legion, including General Sir Ian Hamilton[14] (President for Scotland), Colonel Sir John Brown[15] (immediate past National Chairman) and John Smedley Crooke, MP,[16] (Hon. Sec., House of Commons branch) were strong in their support for an understanding with Germany. Crooke was to be one of the signatories of the 'Link' letter to *The Times* in 1938; he acted, as did Sir Ian Hamilton, as host to visiting German ex-servicemen in these years (a notable occasion being the visit of a German national delegation in 1936). Brown sallied forth into print with the usual points about comradeship.[17] Sir Ian Hamilton was particularly prized by the Nazi propagandists, in part because of his strongly pro-German letters to *The Times*, and in the late thirties found himself being whisked off to Berchtesgaden for consultations with Hitler, during the course of a British Legion visit to Germany.

As Lord Rochdale,[18] a prominent ex-serviceman, was to put it, 'I have never met an ex-Serviceman who took part in the Great War who has anything but friendly feelings for the German ex-Servicemen, against whom he fought.' This did not, of course, inexorably lead to the corollary which Lord Rochdale produced to this, an admiration for 'German philosophy, culture and industry', a trust that 'the good feeling between Germany and England may continue to increase' and a certainty that there was 'no desire on the part of England that Germany should be encircled';[19] nor did it necessarily mean that, as Major-General Sir Alfred Knox, MP,[20] put it, 'I am convinced wherever I go that the vast majority of the people of this country, and especially ex-Servicemen, would heartily welcome a rapprochement with Germany.'[21] But there is no doubt that, for many ex-servicemen, a natural admiration for their former enemies could lead to a desire for a closer relationship with Germany, sympathy for her situation, and either tolerance for, or in certain cases admiration for, the internal régime.

Lt.-Col. Alfred Hacking noted in 1936 that 'at various War reunion meetings of officers and men which I have attended in recent years a very common subject for discussion has been that of our future relationship with Germany. There is, I find, a universal respect for a very gallant ex-enemy and a feeling of regret, growing more profound with the passage of time, that the example of the treaty which terminated the South African War was not followed in 1918. The treaties of Versailles and Trianon seem to be condemned universally in the circles of those who fought through the last War.'[22]

Bruce Bairnsfather, the creator of 'Old Bill', spoke, in 1936, for many ex-servicemen when he railed against the uselessness of war, particularly the First World War, and advocated friendship between Britons and Germans. And, while he did not speak for all, he spoke for a significant number when he went on to say: 'To my mind there is so much for England to admire, and even envy, about the Germany of today. The vigorous and decisive measures taken to improve the health and strength of the population. The rebirth of national pride, after such a disastrous mess as the late war. The enormous and well-disciplined army, which is obviously the best way to ensure self-security and Peace, whilst the world is in the state it is in now. Above all, Europe has in Germany the most vigorous champion against the inroads of Bolshevism.'[23]

The journalist F. D. Bone, writing at the same time as Bairnsfather, stressed that 'Thomas Atkins and Fritz have no wish to point their rifles at each other again', and clearly reflected German propaganda such as that put forward by Goering and Hess when he suggested that 'if those who fought in the Great War would say so in a tone of voice which politicians, war-profiteers and self-appointed experts heard and understood', there would be no more war.

As Goering had put it, 'politicians' and 'pettifogging lawyers' were the cause of war, and all that was needed was for front-line men from both sides to get together. It was a belief in this

principle that was to lead to one of the most amazing stories of this period, recounted by the author Henry Williamson about his old friend T. E. Lawrence, who had died after a motor-cycle accident which occurred on 13 May 1935. According to Williamson Lawrence had, at the time, been considering a scheme for the pacification of Europe. He 'saw how Adolf Hitler was gradually releasing and reaffirming the aspirations of the ordinary man in Germany, and so gradually converting a nation in the image of himself'; also, Lawrence saw parallels between himself and Hitler, who was 'a vegetarian, neither drinking nor smoking, giving the dividends from his one book to the German ex-Service men's funds, owning nothing except a small retreat in the mountains – the equivalent of Lawrence's own cottage on Egdon Hill'.

Lawrence, Williamson tells us, was convinced that the press must have misrepresented Hitler and the new Germany much as they had misrepresented Lawrence himself. 'He read the speeches of Hitler, and was confirmed in his divination. A man who had served in the ranks of the infantry, been wounded, and blinded by mustard gas, a man who loved Beethoven and lived only for the resurrection of his country's happiness – a nation's honour – a man who was the ideal of youth, was one who not only knew the truth, but could speak it and convey it to the minds of others. He was the corner-stone for the new, the realistic pacification of Europe.'

How was Lawrence to get this across to the British people? The answer lay in the ex-service men. 'The English ex-Service man respected the German ex-Service man; and the German ex-Service men were in power in Germany.' An idea was suggested: 'that a mass meeting of ex-Service men be held in the Albert Hall in London, a meeting that would get the greatest publicity because he was calling it, and a speech broadcast that, because of its simple truth and balance, would show complete understanding of and sympathy with the French and German and English family man.'

But, tragically, Lawrence had died. 'I believe', wrote Williamson, 'that had he lived, Lawrence would have confirmed the inner hopes of every ex-Service man in Europe: that the spirit of Christmas Day, 1914 … already hovering in the air, would have swiftly materialised and given, generally in Europe, a vision of a new conception of life.'[24]

We have little direct evidence from Lawrence's own side about this matter, though, as Hamilton puts it, 'Lawrence's … attitude to Fascism and National Socialism gave rise to considerable speculation.'[25] What is certain is that Lawrence's views, as expressed in Williamson's account, approximate very much to Williamson's own. Williamson's political views 'sprang directly from his experiences in the First World War'.[26] His enthusiasm for Nazi Germany was based partly on the great social experiment he observed on his first visit in 1935, and partly on the sense of comradeship he felt for the German soldiers, and for Hitler, 'the only true pacifist in Europe'.[27]

Lawrence's motor-cycle accident took place when he was returning from the post office after writing a telegram in reply to a message from Williamson suggesting that he should meet Hitler. This reply asked Williamson 'to come the next day, wet or fine'.[28] The way in which Williamson mentions this request shows us something of the way in which his own views were projected upon Lawrence:

> The new age must begin: Europe was ready for peace. Lawrence was the natural leader of that age in England. I dreamed of an Anglo-German friendship, the beginning of the pacification of Europe. Hitler and Lawrence must meet. I wrote this to him …[29]

It is clear, too, from a later text, that it was Williamson who put forward the whole idea of the Albert Hall meeting.[30] In the absence of knowledge of Lawrence's response to the idea, we can only say that it is possible that Lawrence shared Williamson's views, and even possible that he

already held them independently before Williamson tried to influence him, but that it is also possible that Williamson, after Lawrence's death, was projecting on to him all that he had hoped he would stand for. The comparison between Lawrence and Hitler, for example, was one that was dear to Williamson, and not necessarily one that would have occurred independently to Lawrence. In a letter to *Time and Tide* in May 1936, Williamson referred to Hitler as 'a very wise and steadfast and truth-perceiving father of his people: a man like T. E. Lawrence, without personal ambitions, a vegetarian, non-smoker, non-drinker, without even a bank-balance', and described the Führer's situation at the time of the Roehm purge, when he was 'actually in tears as he waited in his room', as being like that of T. E. Lawrence 'when he had to shoot an Arab murderer with his own hands'.[31]

Be that as it may, the Lawrence–Williamson episode shows, at its extreme, the view that all one had to do was put 'front-line men' into contact with 'front-line men' for all misunderstandings to be cleared up.

The world of aviation

With many ex-servicemen, as we have seen, feelings of comradeship with an old enemy could lead to a wish for a closer relationship with Nazi Germany, but did not necessarily imply an enthusiasm for the Nazi régime itself, but rather a preparedness to ignore or skate over its implications. There were, it is true, a number of people who expressed more positive enthusiasm, but their numbers were comparatively few. The same picture was very much repeated in the world of aviation.

Skidelsky has noted that there was strong support for the British Union of Fascists among fliers, and that Fascists started their own flying clubs in 1934; and it is interesting to note that the Secretary-General and the Secretary of the Air League, Air-Commodore J. A. Chamier and Colonel Norman Thwaites, were members of the January Club, the latter (who was editor of the journal *Air*) becoming its chairman in late 1934. But, as we have seen, there was no obvious reason, in the early thirties, why those who were attracted to Fascism should necessarily be attracted to German Nazism, though individuals could, of course, combine the two interests. Mosley's strong support for 'the creation of a British Air Force second to none in the world'[32] may well have been a contributory factor to the popularity of the BUF in flying circles. It is also interesting to note that, of the executive committee of the Air League, Chamier and Thwaites do not appear to have gone on record with any pro-Nazi statements, while their colleagues Lord Mottistone (chairman) and Lord Sempill, the former of whom was an intimate of Ribbentrop's as early as 1933,[33] and a considerable apologist for Nazi Germany, while the latter (one of the most famous aviators of the inter-war period), was later to become a member of the council of the pro-Nazi Link, do not appear to have had much connexion with the BUF or with other groups interested in Fascism.

It is elsewhere, therefore, that we must look for the reasons for this attraction to Nazi Germany. These are hard to assess. It may well be that one of the reasons was the strong interest in civil aviation fostered by Nazi Germany, the encouragement of 'Luftsport' (under cover of which military preparation could take place). This may well have combined with the feeling, both in civil and military aviation, that Germany had had a 'raw deal' in not being allowed an Air Force of any kind. There was also the fact that, of all the services, fliers in the First World War had been involved in a kind of duel, in which old standards of courtesy and chivalry had appeared to be maintained, while a spirit of rivalry and comradeship had built up. And, of course, the head of the Luftwaffe, Goering, was one of the great heroes of those days. Finally, while, as H. de Watteville put it in 1935, 'there can be no alternative to the assumption that work has been in progress for the

creation of an air force during many years past', the 'jeremiads as to the hopeless state of defencelessness in which Germany found herself as the result of an iniquitous treaty and of the subsequent jealousy of the ex-enemy Powers' were of great effect, and 'thinly disguised propaganda for the creation of a new German air fleet found a fertile soil'.[34]

Be that as it may, there was a strong pro-German element in aviation circles in the thirties. The most strident and vociferous purveyor of such opinions was the journal *The Aeroplane*. Its editor, C. G. Grey, often appears idiosyncratic in his views, particularly in their strong anti-Semitic content. Grey was an eccentric, whose views can in no way be taken to be typical of anything. His continued presence at the head of this very popular journal is, however, significant at the least of a certain lack of concern among the readership.

'So far as our flying men are concerned', wrote Grey, 'all those who have been to Germany admit that they are happier there than in any other part of Europe.'[35] *The Aeroplane* was pressing, even before the Nazi takeover, for equality for the German Air Force. On the retirement, in January 1933, of Herr Oskar Ursinus, who for twenty-five years had been editor of the magazine *Flugsport*, it was stated that 'everyone, including his many friends abroad, looks forward to the time when Herr Ursinus will be able to see the fruits of his labours in the form of a German aviation restored to equality with that of the other great European nations'.[36]

The advent of the Nazis to power strengthened these feelings. 'Germany has gone the right way about securing internal peace by squashing the Communists',[37] wrote Grey. Germany was now 'the first line of defence of Western civilisation against Eastern barbarism'. When the great invasion came, 'Germany, backed by England and reinforced by British troops on the ground and the Royal Air Force in the air, will probably prove to be quite an adequate defence of Western civilisation.'[38] It was natural that Germany should try to secure herself 'against breaches of the peace from outside by insisting on the nation being adequately armed', for Germany had 'a perfect right to re-arm'. The Germans, like the British, were 'a home-loving, peace-loving people', who believed 'that the best way of assuring peace is to be prepared for war'.[39] Germany's departure from the League of Nations was the only logical action for her to take. 'France insisted on the League regarding Germany as a conquered nation, instead of accepting her as a member of the League on equal terms with the rest. France, meanwhile, is setting up a fresh alliance with Russia … Germany's only course, for her own honour and safety, is to cut loose from the League and re-arm.'[40] France, 'essentially a feminine nation', had always been 'the political courtesan of Europe'.[41] It was Britain's job 'to see that Germany gets fair play next time – and has the help that she needs'.[42] By 1936 Germany was being described as a country that had faith in its destiny, because 'it is ready at a moment's notice to defend itself in the only effective way, namely, by attack, which is the best form of defence. And Germany is building an Air Force fit for the work'.[43]

The internal German régime received the same eulogies. Germany, Grey wrote in 1936, was now ruled by 'sensible middle-class men of real intelligence', who had 'freed Germany from Communism and disruption by Oriental square-heads'. The German people were 'cheerful and contented', so much so that 'one might have imagined that all the discontented people had been carted off to detention camps'. And why not? 'I cannot imagine anything better for the morale of a nation than that all the discontented grousers and grumblers and agitators should be carted off to isolated places where they can grouse at one another till they are sick of grousing.'[44]

It is small wonder that Grey, who had edited *The Aeroplane* since its foundation in 1911 (and who was also editor of Jane's *All the World's Aircraft*), should have found himself constrained to give up the editorship in September 1939.

Sympathy for Germany, and for her claims to air rearmament, did not, of course, preclude

pressure for British rearmament as well. In this the fliers were very much a parallel to pro-German figures in other fields. And it is significant that one of the most vociferous proponents of British air rearmament was Lord Rothermere, whose admiration for Hitler appeared boundless, and who was strongly concerned to build good relations between Germany and Britain. Pro-German attitudes did not necessarily, at this time, denote any anti-patriotic sentiment. Friendship with Germany, and understanding of her, could be seen as a proper aim. It is worth noting that many of the same young men who expressed sympathy for German aspirations, at this stage 3, were later to be among the first to come forward to join the Auxiliary Air Force and the RAFVR.

It is perhaps worth mentioning, at this stage, Lord Londonderry, who was Secretary of State for Air from 1931 to 1935. After his removal from office he was to become an outspoken spokesman for the German régime. No such views were in evidence up to that time, however. His attitudes to Germany as a Minister were complex but in no way yielding.[45]

By early 1936, after a visit to Germany on which he met Goering, Hitler and Ribbentrop, Londonderry showed himself, in a letter to Ribbentrop, to be very sympathetic to the Nazi régime. He expressed doubts about Nazi anti-Semitic policy, but in a tone which showed him to be seeing it as a tactical error rather than a crime: 'As I told you, I have no great affection for the Jews. It is possible to trace their participation in most of those international disturbances which have created so much havoc in different countries, but on the other hand one can find many Jews strongly ranged on the other side.'[46] From now on, his letters to the press and his public statements were to mark him out as a leading pro-German. As Middlemas and Barnes point out, by March 1936 Hoesch was already referring to Lord Londonderry as 'one of those on whom the German Government relied for the right opinions'.[47]

Already established pro-Germanists

As Martin Gilbert has pointed out, although, in the twenties, a large number of people were affected by guilt-feelings for Versailles, 'there was little active pro-Germanism … Positive pro-Germanism was a mood confined to a small number of people, mostly journalists, writers and those with philosophical beliefs of an unusual nature.'[48] It will be instructive, nevertheless, to take a few examples of such people, to show the extent to which, for some of those who actively promoted Germany's interests before the rise of Nazism, the change of régime failed to change their views. Of course, there were large numbers of scholars and students of Germany, and friends of the German people, who saw in the Nazi régime the destruction of much that they had held dear in German civilisation; but it is worth taking three differing examples of enthusiasts who found themselves actively promoting the new régime, in order to see some of the forces at work within them. These examples will be William Harbutt Dawson, Rolf Gardiner and Philip Conwell-Evans.

William Harbutt Dawson was 73 in 1933. He had started writing on Germany well before the First World War, and, as he proudly declared in his *Who's Who* entry, 'most of his earlier books were written for the purpose of interpreting German thought, life, history and institutions for English people, and particularly of expounding German practice in the treatment of social, economic and municipal questions'.[49] He had been educated privately, and at Berlin University; twice married, in each case to a German wife. He does not appear to have been attached to any university, but produced his works as a private citizen. Before 1914 he had produced at least eleven books on the subject of Germany, including *Germany and the Germans* (1894), *German Life in Town and Country* (1901), and *The Evolution of Modern Germany* (1908).

After the War, Dawson was obsessed by the wrongs which he saw as having been done to Germany at the Versailles Treaty. His views went considerably beyond those of most of the

'revisionist' writers. His book *Germany under the Treaty,* published in 1932, suggested ten areas in which territorial revision was necessary to do justice to Germany, and to preserve European peace. Reviewers described the book as partisan, pro-German, and antiall the nations which had 'annexed' former German territories.[50]

The advent of Nazism made little difference to Dawson's views on these questions; to them was added an admiration for the régime that seemed to be doing something about these things. Hitler was 'both a big and a bold man', who had 'saved Germany from confusion and collapse', and might well prove 'to have saved Europe from the same fate'.[51] At the time of the Rhineland crisis Dawson stated that 'the importance of the fact that Germany now claims that she has at last won back her independence, self-respect and honour as a sovereign State is far too great to cause men of just mind and of good will to trouble overmuch about ways and means'.[52]

Hitler was the man to put Europe right. The grave injustices of the Treaty could only be rectified by his methods, for all others had been tried. From 1936 onwards Dawson involved himself particularly with the question of Czechoslovakia.

Where Dawson was attracted to the Nazis because of Hitler's capacity for getting results, by fair means or foul, in foreign affairs, Rolf Gardiner was clearly attracted by certain attributes of the internal régime, which related to his already formed predilections. Gardiner's views, in the twenties and thirties, were an amalgam of youth movementry, 'organic' agricultural theory, folk-dance and folk-song enthusiasm, and ethnic theories about Britain and Germany, combined with the usual interest, in such circles, in Social Credit. As early as 1923, as an undergraduate reading modern languages at Cambridge, Gardiner became editor of *Youth*, 'a university magazine started in 1920 with a strong leftward slant and a leaning towards Guild Socialism'.[53] Gardiner had founded the Cambridge Social Credit Study Circle, and had already come into contact with the German Youth Movement, and both interests began to permeate *Youth*, which changed considerably. As Marwick puts it: 'In June 1923 *Youth* turned decisively away from immediate political interests to become instead "an international quarterly of young enterprise"; an article on the German *Nacktkultur* was accompanied by a photograph of naked German youths plunging into a pool. A later number reported that "German youth movements have lit the beacon-lights of a new civilisation and culture."'[54] Gardiner also, for a short time, became a member of the Kibbo Kift.

After University, Gardiner spent much of the inter-war period as a farmer, on various properties in Wessex, 'restoring reverted wilderness into fertility by way of a balanced and economic self-maintenance in husbandry'. At one of his properties, Springhead, 'a great effort was made to revive local festivals, music and dancing', and Gardiner even had a project for a 'rural university'.[55] He formed the 'Springhead Ring' of singers and youth workers, which existed 'on both sides of the North Sea'. For, as Lord Lymington pointed out, 'Some of Rolf's forebears were Baltic people, and part of his life is devoted to drawing together the peoples who surround the North Sea and the Baltic for common endeavour in forestry, music, farming and landscape.'[56] As early as 1922, as an undergraduate, he had taken a group of English folk singers to Germany.

Through these interests Gardiner met Lord Lymington, and was introduced to *The English Mistery.*[57] He was also one of the group which later gathered around Lymington, which was called the *Kinship in Husbandry,* concerning itself with what would now be called an 'organic' approach to farming. 'Our detractors would quite erroneously dub us the compost and lavatory school',[58] wrote Lymington. Prominent in the group was George Stapledon,[59] the professor from Aberystwyth who had revolutionised grassland farming.

Throughout the thirties, Gardiner was to be strongly connected with Lymington, both in the English Mistery and in the English Array, and also in the *New Pioneer* venture, and the Kinship in Husbandry.[60]

Gardiner's desire for links with Germany were proclaimed in various places, including the journal *North Sea and Baltic*. In 1928, with Heinz Rocholl, he edited a symposium entitled *Britain and Germany: A Frank Discussion Instigated by Members of the Younger Generation*, which was based on a conference on Anglo-German relations. His own contribution to this volume showed his belief in the 'kinship' of German and English youth, compared with 'the Mediterranean peoples', which had 'turned aside into the ways of barrenness, seeking those things which moth and rust doth corrupt'.[61] In the same year D. H. Lawrence had written to Gardiner (who was one of his most fervent admirers) praising his creed of 'song, dance and labour', and singling out German youth as the vehicle which would bring such ideas to fruition: 'The German youth is almost ready to fuse into a new sort of unity, it seems to me: us against the world. But the English are older and weary even of victory … The Germans take their shirts off and work in the hay: they are still physical: the English are so woefully disembodied.'[62]

In 1932 Gardiner produced a book entitled *World Without End: British Politics and the Younger Generation*, He described it as 'a modest and tentative footnote to ten years of buoyant activity by members of the younger generation in Britain and Germany.' In it he advised Britain to turn from the Empire to Europe, to which 'spiritually we owe allegiance'. Unfortunately, all the European peoples were suffering from an 'impoverishment of their national types', caused on the whole by democracy, which had 'annulled the mystery of power without which men cannot be men, stripped of which they feel deeply humiliated, like a cock despoiled of his plumage'. Fascism, and even 'the inchoate forms of National-Socialism', because they were '*middle-class* attempts at the restoration of male power', had something 'hideously common, vulgar, mean in their expression'. They were neither aristocratic nor popular. 'The yeomen and the aristocrats of Britain – it is these who must re-establish themselves.' What was needed was a *Bund*, an élite to lead Britain forwards, not the 'rather pathetic attempt of suburbia to re-establish itself in the soil' which was represented by Mosley.[63]

Within a year Gardiner's doubts about Nazism had all been forgotten. The Nazi Revolution, once it had succeeded, found in him an ardent admirer. In 1933 Gardiner contributed, to a Berlin publication entitled *Nationalismus von Ausland gesehen*, an essay entitled 'Die deutsche Revolution von England gesehen', in which he described the German revolution as 'the spring storm of a new Renaissance'. Not only Germany, but the whole Germanic world 'should have a share in the blessing of this rebirth'. The call of the Germans, he wrote, had reached English ears. 'Their leaders are young men, who fought as simple soldiers in the trenches, while we are still being cheated by prating old men … Let us be true men and women, who have trust in the voice of our hearts. We know that what we all want is magnanimity, manly goals, and that pure religion which is completely free from the dregs of a stale morality. We need what the Germans are in the act of finding once more: the discipline of togetherness.' Gardiner's article stressed, above all, that the Revolution's greatest support was the new generation that had grown up in Germany since 1915.[64]

What Gardiner saw in Germany was a new and vital paganism, which would replace the outworn values of Christianity. From 1933 onwards he stressed the fact that the new German leadership was 'effecting a policy of self-sufficiency and defence based on the values of yeoman tradition'. The cause of the tension between Germany and Britain, he wrote, was 'the irreconcilability of religion and irreligion, the one championing the values of earth and bread, the other cleaving to the advantages of commerce and usury'. This tension would disappear if the British returned 'to our own English religion which was nurtured in the soil of our land until supplanted by alien, neo-Phoenician ways'. Civilisation depended 'on the remaining northern stocks of Europe'.[65]

Dawson was concerned with Germany's rights, Gardiner with Germany's role in the dawn of a new and purer age. The third figure with whom we will be dealing, Philip Conwell-Evans, was more straightforwardly concerned with friendship and peace. This concern blinded him to other matters, to the extent of making him one of Germany's most useful British contacts, until the point in 1938 when he became aware of the German danger, and of the extent to which he had been blind to it.

T. P. Conwell-Evans was 36 in 1933. He had been Lord Noel-Buxton's private secretary when Noel-Buxton had been a Minister in the second Labour Government from 1929 to 1930. In 1932 he published, with the Oxford University Press, a book entitled *Foreign Policy from a Back Bench*, which, as Martin Gilbert puts it, was 'a serious contribution to the war-guilt controversy';[66] based on Noel-Buxton's private papers as a pre-war Liberal MP, the book showed the extent to which Britain had been responsible for the situation in which war had broken out, and the corresponding injustice of accusations of German 'war-guilt'. In the same year Conwell-Evans, who had an Oxford doctorate, was invited by some German friends to give a course of lectures on diplomatic history at the University of Königsberg, where he was to remain for eighteen months.[67] (It is interesting to note that Königsberg gave W. H. Dawson an honorary doctorate in 1936.) On Conwell-Evans's return to England in 1934 he came under the influence of Dr Gärtner, and became heavily involved in Anglo-German discussions. He appears to have spent most of the thirties commuting between Britain and Germany, organising visits to Germany by prominent British personalities, and acting as an adviser and helper to Ribbentrop and the other German leaders. Tom Jones, who met him in 1936, described him as 'an old and intimate friend of von Ribbentrop', who had 'a wide and influential circle of friends in Germany'; he had 'a passionate hostility to our Foreign Office because of its attitude to Berlin', and was 'so blind to the blemishes of the Germans as to make one see the virtues of the French'.[68] Only in late 1938 did Conwell-Evans change his attitude, and send warnings to the Foreign Office as to German intentions.

An article written by Conwell-Evans in 1934, entitled 'Impressions of Germany', gives the flavour of his pro-Nazism. He starts 'in order to avoid all misunderstanding', with a 'personal statement', in which he makes it clear that good relationships with England would depend on certain changes, including 'the rehabilitation in some form of the Jews as a race. This is not to ignore the fact that Germany has a Jewish problem, but the apparent condemnation of the Jews as a race … appears to British opinion to be equivalent to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes'. Another change would have to be 'the re-establishment of conditions which assure to each citizen constitutional rights and liberties and protect him from arbitrary detention in concentration camps'.[69]

It was wrong, Conwell-Evans went on, to think, because of some of the cruelty that had occurred, 'that the entire Nazi movement is bad and vicious'. On the contrary, 'only a very small minority of roughs' brought the movement into disrepute. 'The vast majority are animated by idealism and a desire for sacrifice and service on behalf of the community.' Englishmen should remember what they had inflicted on the Germans in 1918–19.

The article continued with sympathetic descriptions of University life in Germany, and a praise of the Nazi ability to make the Germans hold up their heads once more. 'Those who have not lived in Germany have no idea what it has meant to the Germans to be treated as pariahs … It has been brought home to me during my stay in Germany that the "War Guilt" clause is more than a phrase, more than a judgment.' Successive scars had been left on the Germans by Allied actions since the War. When Hitler became Chancellor 'a feeling of relief and thanksgiving went through the country, as if the burden of "war guilt" had been thrown off'.

Germany now had the courage to speak her mind. She also had hopes for a long, stable

government. The Communist threat was destroyed. The disunion of Germany was brought to an end. The National Socialist movement symbolised the birth of 'a sense of nationhood' in Germany such as it had never before felt. This sense made the Germans 'respect the achievement of other nations, especially young peoples like the Poles, who have successfully re-emerged in recent times'. The Nazis were 'not aggressively national in the sense that they desire to interfere with the independence of neighbouring countries…. They do wish, however, to be able to defend their country.' Above all, Conwell-Evans was convinced of the 'underlying pacific aims of the new Germany', whose 'confidence and ready co-operation' the British people could win if they treated her as 'a trusted equal'.[70]

In this, and in other articles,[71] Conwell-Evans showed his pro-German propaganda to be based on a naïve but decent outlook. As Davidson wrote, he was 'well-meaning, and enthusiastic'.[72] Even at the height of his enthusiasm he could declare his opposition to certain German internal policies, even if he played them down. It is one of the ironies of the situation that violent and undiscriminating enthusiasts like Dawson and Gardiner were little used by the Nazi leaders in their attempts at reconciliation with Great Britain; it was more complex figures like Conwell-Evans and Tennant, whose views were less monolithic, who were seen to carry greater weight. They might be equally enthusiastic, but their methods of thought gave the impression of having carefully weighed the arguments before coming down on one side.

Dawson, Gardiner and Conwell-Evans show, in the diversity of their outlooks, something of the complexity of attitudes towards Nazi Germany, even among those who had had strong, pro-German interests before the Nazi revolution.

The peace-lovers

Dr Gärtner's contacts, particularly those in the Anglo-German Group, included many people whose prime concern was peace. Some were Quakers and pacifists. Others were members of the League of Nations Union. By the nature of things, their reactions to Nazi Germany were often very varied. Many of them, when they saw the nature of the Nazi régime, reacted violently against it. Others were happily shepherded by Conwell-Evans on visits to Hitler, and continued to work for Anglo-German *rapprochement*, not in blindness as to the nature of Germany's internal régime, but because they thought that the cause of peace overrode all other considerations.

Among those who, from an early date, were most uncompromising in their condemnation of the excesses of the Nazi régime was W. Arnold-Forster, who, in an article on 'Germany's Concentration Camps' written in November 1933 declared that 'the whole system is an atrocity'. He himself had 'worked for years for justice for that great Germany whom we have wronged', he wrote. 'I urge now a courageous recognition of Germany's irresistibly just claim to equality of rights in disarmament. But I know that no Germany, however exasperated or injured, can afford to strangle liberty, or suffocate justice and mercy; no manhood of a nation, however physically splendid, can with impunity impose a moratorium on its conscience; no Chancellor, however brave his words now about national unity and international peace, can prove his sincerity to the world so long as "ties of unlimited loyalty" bind him to the assassins of Rathenau or the Potempa murderers, and so long as the atrocities of this concentration camp system remain his instruments.'[73]

Lord Noel-Buxton, however, deploring the anti-German policy to be found in the debates in the House of Commons, showed an awareness of the violence and the repressive measures to be found in the new Germany, while producing a series of excuses for these attitudes. These excuses were to be repeated *ad nauseam* by other apologists. 'However much we, with our English tradition',

wrote Noel-Buxton in a 1933 letter to *The Times*, 'see to deplore in the German situation, we must admit that the Allied policy since the War is mainly responsible for the abnormal psychology of today. Would it not perhaps be produced in similar circumstances in other countries with a degree of violence at least as great? What would be our own state of mind in a parallel situation if, following defeat by Germany, we had been deprived of food so that children died of hunger; if four years after the war Yorkshire had been occupied and a reign of terror established; if till four years ago Kent and Surrey had been garrisoned by Negro troops from Africa; if our late enemies' promise to disarm were entirely unredeemed? Would we have kept our heads and preserved our standards of tolerance?' The answer, wrote Noel-Buxton, must be mutual disarmament.[74]

Lord Parmoor, the father of Sir Stafford Cripps, echoed Noel-Buxton's words a fortnight later, on his return from a month's visit to Germany. 'To prevent misunderstanding, it is necessary to say that "Hitlerism" makes no appeal to me', he wrote. 'I detest all sectarian and racial prejudices'. But German actions had been 'largely instigated by the unjust conditions of the Treaty of Versailles', and the 'resulting misery of all classes in Germany'. What was needed was disarmament.[75]

Lord Allen of Hurtwood, in Marwick's words, believed in 'the dual programme' of the peace-makers of the thirties: 'legitimate grievances must be met by appeasement, illegitimate ambitions faced by collective security'. He had 'always denounced the discriminatory restraints imposed upon Germany by the Versailles Treaty', and 'could not feel it right to change his views because there was a change in the German régime'.[76] Like Noel-Buxton,Lothian and many others, he saw Nazi excesses as the result of Allied actions in the post-war period.

Allen's interview with Hitler on 25 January 1935 was typical of the 'personal initiatives' that he felt were important for the pursuance of his main end: the return of Germany to the League of Nations. As he wrote to Hitler after the interview, every word that had been spoken had filled him with hope. Now he could believe in a conclusive agreement between the two peoples.[77] Allen really believed in Hitler's sincerity, and in the fact that the German leaders wished for peace, as his contemporary statements show.[78] This naïvety continued throughout the mid-thirties. In 1936, after conversations with the German leaders at the Nuremberg Rally, he declared that 'he had little doubt … that Germany was prepared to rejoin the League'.[79]

Allen was not blind to the persecutions within Germany, but he did feel, on the one hand, that they were excusable by the German situation, and on the other, that initiatives such as his might help to palliate them. In March 1936 Allen, together with G. P. Gooch, Gilbert Murray and Lord Rutherford, wrote to *The Times* declaring the need for a sign of good will from Germany, and suggesting that, to this end, Hitler should give up his harsh treatment of the Jews.[80] Such naïve confidence in the strength of their own powers as moral arbiters and ambassadors was the mark of a certain type of searcher after peace.

By 1938, however, Allen had become aware that the Nazis were, in this area, incorrigible. The 'tragic evils which are being perpetrated in Germany so far as German minorities like the Jews are concerned' were the main obstacle to any understanding between the two nations. They were 'a tragic impediment to that peace which we all desire to see established', and denoted 'a disparity of outlook between our two countries, so far as humanity and cruelty are concerned' which would 'make it extremely difficult to carry through to success those negotiations which both Germany and this country so ardently desire'.[81]

Despite this, Allen's attitude to Munich was equivocal,[82] and returned to the idea that 'we have all sinned'. But what is important to our present study is the extent to which, from 1933 to 1938, a man of the undoubted moral qualities of Clifford Allen was prepared, consciously or unconsciously, to temper his moral concerns with an apparently more practical commitment to the

overriding need for peace, and for justice on issues in which Germany appeared the wronged party. Much of the blame for this must be laid at the door of a certain ingenuousness, and a preparedness to believe the best of the dictator whom he had met face to face.

Lord Lothian, who first met Hitler four days after Allen, might at first sight appear to be from the same stable. A highly religious man, devoted to the Christian Science faith (though he had originally been a Roman Catholic), he took a moral line on politics. He was not a pacifist, however, though his ideal was 'the self-government of men and women responsible to their highest sense of right, and a world commonwealth of peace-loving nations'.[83]

Lothian had, however, a number of other attributes which made him a very different matter from Allen. He was a Milnerite, with strong Empire connexions, and was influenced, above all through the agency of Smuts, by a more world-wide, Imperial view of European problems. He had a limited experience of government, both at second hand, through his time as private secretary to Lloyd George from 1916 to 1921, and at first hand, as a short-lived Minister in the National Government from 1931 to 1932, before he and the other Samuelite Liberals withdrew from that administration. A prominent Liberal peer, he retained his many connexions with those in power, including Baldwin and Simon, though Baldwin regarded him as a 'rum cove' who, on India, would be 'thoroughly useless *in* the Cabinet but useful outside'.[84] Tom Jones, in conversation with Baldwin in 1932, gave a very telling portrait of the man: 'He has ability, intelligence, unstable judgment … He is apt to be the victim of his most recent experience.'[85]

Commonwealth attitudes to Germany were affected by the dangerous situation in the Far East.[86] Whatever Smuts's later views, Lothian and Smuts, in the early stages of the Nazi régime, represented in part the reactions of the British Empire to the European problem: 'We *must* prevent a Japanese–German combination, which will be fatal. And this can only be done by ceasing to treat Germany as a pariah in Europe.'[87]

In private, Lothian was prepared to write, in 1933, that 'like most Liberals, I loathe the Nazi regime'. Nevertheless, he felt that 'the first condition to reform it is that we should be willing to do justice to Germany'.[88] Like so many others, he felt, as he said in a speech in Nottingham on Armistice Day 1933, that 'in part, at any rate, that regime is the product of our own conduct'.[89]

This was the extent of Lothian's commitment up to his meeting with Hitler on 29 January 1935. This was arranged on the initiative of Conwell-Evans, who was present at the meeting, together with Hess and Ribbentrop.

The interview dealt with the need for a political agreement in Europe, to precede an arms agreement.[90] Lothian came away with the impression that there was no immediate prospect of war, and that a 'frank discussion' between Germany and Great Britain could produce a political settlement. 'The central fact in Europe today', he wrote in *The Times*, on his return, 'is that Germany does not want war, and is prepared to renounce it absolutely as a method of settling her disputes with her neighbours, provided she is given real equality.'[91] His private letters over the next two years reflect the same views, together with the opinion, shared with Allen and others, that the German régime, despite its excesses, was bound to evolve towards moderation, and that 'the best way of ensuring that is to show that people in this country are interested in Germany and prepared to meet them on ordinary terms'.[92] The Germans must, of course, be told what British views were. 'Every time I see Ribbentrop, and every time I know anybody going to Nazi headquarters', he wrote to Allen, 'I tell him to tell them that the present obstacle to better Anglo-German relations to-day is the persecution of the Christians, Jews and Liberal Pacifists.'[93] In a speech to the Anglo-German Fellowship in 1936 Lothian stressed that there were 'aspects of the internal policy of the National-Socialist State which are a serious obstacle to the establishment of cordial relations between the British and German people', and that also the 'speed and extent of

Germany's rearmament' had caused a 'not unnatural anxiety'. He begged the German guests 'not to underrate the influence these things exert on British policy or the weapon they give to those elements, here and abroad, who are opposed to Anglo-German reconciliation'. Britain, on the other hand, must seize the opportunity of friendship by abandoning 'once and for all what was called in Germany the Versailles attitude of mind'.[94]

Lothian, though he 'loathed all the dictatorships', felt that 'Mussolini and the Pope are worst', closely followed by Litvinov. Hitler 'who is a visionary rather than a gangster', was the least evil of the lot, and 'the Germans in themselves are much better people than the Italians and the Russians'.[95] Hitler was 'one of the creative figures of this generation'.[96]

Like Allen, Lothian substantially changed his views as the thirties proceeded, and as the real ambitions of Germany became more clear. What interests us is the extent to which, up to 1937, he represents a whole well-meaning area of British opinion, much like Allen.

His views received fairly wide dissemination, as he was a considerable public speaker and journalist. His letters to *The Times*, too, contributed to this publicity. He had considerable influence with Garvin of *The Observer.* The Germans were wrong, however, in considering him to have much influence in political circles (as were the later promulgators of the 'Cliveden Set' myth). Cowling says 'he was not of first importance … but he was listened to'.[97] Listened to he may have been, but his judgment was, even before the Nazi question, widely in doubt. Though he could 'expound a case very convincingly' he was highly suggestible. 'I remember him coming back from the USA full of American mass-production; then before going to Russia he was so convinced of property as the root of all evil that he was hardly distinguishable from a communist; then last Sunday … he was certain that the world could not get on without capitalists and captains of industry.'[98] In foreign affairs he was seen as at most a 'talented amateur',[99] and the Foreign Office resented his naïvety, much as it resented other informal approaches to Germany.[100]

Allen and Lothian have brought us into the world of 'appeasement'. That world has been excellently documented in a series of major works, and will only be touched on, in this volume, when it relates to our specific concerns with pro-Nazism, general trends of public opinion, and German propaganda. What Noel-Buxton, Allen and Lothian have shown us is the extent to which a concern for European peace, and for 'justice for Germany', could lead to a belief in Hitler's good intentions, and in the possibility of a moderation of the German internal régime if Germany was properly informed of our views of it, and if at the same time her just requirements were met.

1 Goering, 'Vom Segen der Volksgemeinschaft'. Rede zum Winterhilfswerk in den Krupp-Werken in Essen am 4 Dezember 1934. Goering, *Reden und Aufsätze,* hrsg. von Dr Erich Gritzbach, Munich, 1943.

2 James Murphy, *Who Sent Rudolf Hess?* London, 1941, p. 11.

3 *Chips, The Diaries of Sir Henry Channon,* London, 1967, p. 36.

4 Telegram from Hoesch to German Foreign Office, quoted in Frances Donaldson, *Edward VIII,* London, 1974, p. 196.

5 Dr Paul Schmidt, *Hitler's Interpreter,* London, 1951, p. 37.

6 Wootton, op. cit., p. 185.

7 James Murphy, op. cit., p. 11.

8 The English edition, whose translation has been being used, has 'would' at this point. The original German text uses the word 'soll'.

9 Dr Paul Schmidt, *Statist auf diplomatischer Bühne, 1923–1945,* Bonn, 1949. Shortened English translation, *Hitler's Interpreter,* London, 1951.

10 Interview in *Berliner Tageblatt,* reprinted in *Anglo-German Review,* I, 5, March 1937, p. 10.

11 Wootton, op. cit., p. 172.

12 Ibid., pp. 196–7.

13 Ibid., p. 197.

14 Hero of the South African War, and Commander-in-Chief at Gallipoli.

15 Served in Suvla landings, and in Palestine. A successful architect, who was to be Deputy Director-General of the Territorial Army from 1937 to 1939.

16 Unionist MP for Deritend Division of Birmingham.

17 See 'The Ex-Servicemen and Germany', *Anglo-German Review*, July 1937, p. 331.

18 Served with distinction in South African War and Great War, ending as Lt.-Col. in command of 1/6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, and temporary Brigadier. Liberal MP before the war.

19 *Anglo-German Review*, July 1937, I, pp. 334–5.

20 Conservative MP for High Wycombe. Military Attaché, Petrograd Embassy, 1911–18.

21 *Anglo-German Review*, July 1937, I, 335.

22 Letter to *The Times*, 24 Feb. 1936.

23 Bruce Bairnsfather, 'Old Bill would be delighted', *Anglo-German Review*, Nov. 1936, pp. 15–16.

24 Henry Williamson, 'Lawrence of Arabia and Germany', *Anglo-German Review*, Jan. 1937, p. 107.

25 Alastair Hamilton, *The Appeal of Fascism*, London, 1971, p. 267.

26 Daniel Farson, 'Recognising Henry Williamson'.

27 See Hamilton, op. cit., pp. 265–8.

28 Henry Williamson, in *T. E. Lawrence and his Friends*, ed. A. W. Lawrence, London, 1937.

29 Ibid.

30 Henry Williamson, *Genius of Friendship: T. E. Lawrence*, London, 1941, p. 75.

31 Letter to *Time and Tide*, 30 May 1936. For another reference in the same vein see Williamson's *Goodbye West Country*, p. 228.

32 Mosley to Rothermere, 12 July 1934.

33 See, e.g., Brian Lunn, *Switchback: an Autobiography*, London, 1948, p. 246.

34 H. de Watteville, 'Germany Rearms', *Nineteenth Century and After*, April 1935.

35 *The Aeroplane*, 24 May 1933.

36 *The Aeroplane*, 4 Jan. 1933.

37 *The Aeroplane*, 24 May 1933.

38 *The Aeroplane*, 19 April 1933.

39 *The Aeroplane*, 24 May 1933.

40 *The Aeroplane*, 18 Oct. 1933.

41 *The Aeroplane*, 20 Sept. 1933.

42 *The Aeroplane*, 20 Dec. 1933.

43 *The Aeroplane*, March 1936.

44 Ibid.

45 See, e.g., Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler*, p. 127.

46 Letter from Londonderry to Ribbentrop, 21 Feb. 1936, quoted in Londonderry, *Ourselves and Germany*, London, 1938, pp. 111–12.

47 Middlemas and Barnes, op. cit., p. 805, p. 923.

48 Martin Gilbert, *The Roots of Appeasement*, London, 1966, p. 120.

49 *Who's Who*, 1942.

50 See, e.g., *The Saturday Review*, 3 June 1933.

51 William Harbutt Dawson, 'Hitler's Challenge', *The Nineteenth Century and After*, April, 1936.

52 Ibid.

53 J. L. Finlay: 'John Hargrave, The Green Shirts, and Social Credit', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 5, No. 1., p. 53.

54 Arthur Marwick: 'Youth in Britain, 1920–60: Detachment and Commitment', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 5, No. 10, p. 41.

55 H. J. Massingham, *Remembrance: An Autobiography*, 1941, p. 139.

56 The Earl of Portsmouth, *A Knot of Roots*, London, 1965, pp. 80–1.

57 See pp. 317–18.

58 Ibid., p. 78.

59 Professor of Agricultural Botany, Aberystwyth, and Director of the Welsh Plant Breeding Station.

60 See pp. 317–29.

61 Gardiner, 'Meditation on the Future of Northern Europe', in Gardiner and Rocholl, *Britain and Germany*, London, 1928, p. 131.

62 Letter from D. H. Lawrence to Rolf Gardiner, 7 Jan. 1928, quoted in Gardiner, *World Without End*, pp. 34–5.

63 Gardiner, *World Without End: British Politics and the Younger Generation* London, 1932, pp. 9, 17, 33.

64 Gardiner, 'Die deutsche Revolution von England gesehen', p. 18.

65 Rolf Gardiner, in *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, April 1938.

66 Gilbert, op. cit., p. 28.
67 See T. P. Conwell-Evans, *None so Blind*, London, 1947, p. xi.
68 Tom Jones, *Diary with Letters*, London, 1954, entry for 4 Sept. 1936 (p. 242).
69 T. P. Conwell-Evans, 'Impressions of Germany', *The Nineteenth Century and After*, Jan. 1934, p. 72.
70 Ibid., pp. 72–82.
71 E.g., 'Between Berlin and London', *Nineteenth Century and After*, Jan. 1936.
72 Quoted in Rhodes James, op. cit., p. 400.
73 W. Arnold-Forster, 'Germany's Concentration Camps', *Nineteenth Century and After*, Nov. 1933, p. 559.
74 Lord Noel-Buxton, letter to *The Times*, 14 July 1933.
75 Lord Parmoor, letter to *The Times*, 27 July 1933.
76 Arthur Marwick, *Clifford Allen, the Open Conspirator*, London, 1964, p. 155.
77 Letter from Allen to Hitler, 4 Feb. 1935. See Jacobsen, op. cit., p. 335.
78 E.g., *Daily Telegraph*, 28 Jan. 1935.
79 Lord Allen of Hurtwood, speech at Halifax, reported in *The Times*, 6 Oct. 1936.
80 Letter to *The Times*, 20 March 1936.
81 Lord Allen, in House of Lords debate, 27 July 1938.
82 See letter to *Manchester Guardian*, 20 Oct. 1938.
83 J. R. M. Butler, *Lord Lothian*, London, 1960, p. 254.
84 Tom Jones, *Diary with Letters*, entry for 3 July 1932, p. 44.
85 Ibid.
86 See R. Ovendale, *'Appeasement' and the English Speaking World*, Univ. Wales Press, 1975.
87 Letter of 14 Dec. 1934, quoted in Butler, op. cit., p. 202.
88 Letter to Sir D. Stevenson, 24 Nov. 1933, quoted in Butler, op. cit., p. 197.
89 Quoted in Gilbert, *The Roots of Appeasement*, p. 144.
90 See Butler, op. cit., Appendix III, pp. 330–7.
91 *The Times*, 31 Jan. 1935.
92 Lothian to Reginald Coupland, 11 July 1935, quoted in Gilbert, op. cit., p. 163.
93 Letter to Lord Allen of Hurtwood, 18 Oct. 1935, quoted in Butler, op. cit., p. 206.
94 Report in *The Times*, 15 July 1936.
95 Lothian letter, 7 May 1936, quoted in Martin Gilbert, *Britain and Germany Between the Wars*, London, 1964, p. 99.
96 Lothian letter 1 May 1936, quoted in Butler, op. cit., p. 236.
97 Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler*, p. 133.
98 Tom Jones, *Diary with Letters*, entry for 3 July 1932 (p. 44).
99 Butler, op. cit., p. 237.
100 Middlemas, *Diplomacy of Illusion*, p. 74.

[6]

Diverse Individuals

THE PERIOD from 1933 to 1935, unlike the years that were to follow it, presented no very clear picture when it came to attitudes to Germany. We have seen that public opinion, when the Nazi régime impinged on it (usually when extreme measures were reported), was largely unfavourable. On the other hand, there was no great urgency to involve oneself on one side or another. Certain groups who had special reason to desire German friendship contained a percentage who took such a desire further, expressing positive enthusiasm for the Nazi régime. But, on the whole, enthusiasts were, in this period, individuals of varying kinds, whose motives for enthusiasm were as varied as their personalities. In this chapter we will be surveying a chosen cross-section of such individuals and assessing the motives which affected them.

Three Politicians – Moore, Wilson and Lloyd George

In the period 1933–5 only a very small number of MPs came out with strongly pro-German statements. In the House itself Adrian Baillie, Unionist MP for Linlithgow (who had been Rosenberg's host at Leeds Castle on his 1933 visit),[1] did venture to mention, in the Disarmament Debate of 6 February 1934, that, though he 'had never been particularly pro-German', he felt that 'the anti-German spirit which has resulted from the Nazi revolution has been entirely overdone'. The early days of the Nazi revolution, he said, had 'made pretty bad reading, but we also know that, had it not been for that revolution, within a month a very formidable Communist uprising had been planned'.[2] His was, however, one of the very rare statements of this kind.

Lt.-Col. Thomas Moore, by his statements inside and outside the House, was the only major proponent of Nazi Germany among MPs in this period. In the Supply Debate of 31 May 1935 he described Germany as having been 'bowed down with humiliation' until she was 'rescued by Herr Hitler'. Now that she had 'recovered her self-respect and her soul', what she needed was 'protection so that she will be able to take her place among the nations of the world which her new circumstances justifies [*sic*]'. Attempts were, however, being made 'to poison the public mind by exaggerated and inaccurate statements'.[3]

Moore, who was 47 in 1933, had been a member of the Regular Army from 1908 to 1925, serving in France, in Ireland (1916–18 and 1920–23) and in Russia (1918–20). From 1925 onwards he was Unionist MP for Ayr Burghs. In 1937 he was to be knighted. He early became one of Dr Gärtner's contacts. One of his strongest characteristics was anti-Bolshevism, strengthened by his period of Russian service, and this anti-Bolshevism was the basis both for his temporary support of Mosley[4] and also for his more continuing admiration for Hitler and Nazism. 'If we were to isolate Germany and therefore prove to the German people that Herr Hitler had failed them, deluded them, betrayed them, eventually they will discard him and seek another God', he wrote in 1933. 'There is only one, the anti-Christ of Communism.'[5]

Moore visited Hitler for the first time on 28 September 1933, and shortly thereafter produced a series of statements about his impressions. 'If I may judge from my personal knowledge of Herr

Hitler', he wrote on 22 October, 'peace and justice are the keywords of his policy'.[6] Such views continued to be expressed by him throughout the thirties. He was 'satisfied that Hitler is absolutely honest and sincere'.[7] Britain and Germany had 'a certain amount of common ancestry and common outlook',[8] and those who objected to Britain attending the Olympic Games in 1936 were indulging in 'impertinent pinpricks against a friendly nation'.[9] The British press was 'obviously determined to see no good in the Nazi administration', and the British public was 'too apt to concentrate on the treatment of the Jews and on the trouble with the Churches – both equally regrettable, I admit', while paying 'little attention to the happiness, security and hope that Herr Hitler has brought to his followers'. Little thought was given 'to the immense reduction of unemployment, to the almost complete elimination of graft, corruption, and unnatural vice; to the enormous social progress in housing, roads, education, and public health, and … the newborn atmosphere of self-reliance, self-confidence and self-help with which the Leader has imbued his people'. Hitler had 'rescued a great and gallant people from the depths of humiliation and despair, and … restored them to the position which their history, tradition, culture and character fully merit and entitle them'.[10] In October 1938, when talking about the possibility of war with Germany, Moore exclaimed: 'God forbid that we should fight a friendly and kindly people.'[11] Hitler saw Moore as 'a man of peace, a statesman and a clear-sighted administrator of his country'.[12]

Moore has often been coupled, by writers on this period, with his fellow MP, Sir Arnold Wilson. 'Sir Thomas Moore and Sir Arnold Wilson were typical of parliamentary appeasers', write Gilbert and Gott.[13] Yet Wilson was a man of a very different sort from Moore. Where Moore was uncomplicated, Wilson was complicated, as we shall see from the various appearances he will make in this book.

He was an ex-Army man and a retired colonial administrator, who entered Parliament in 1933 as the Conservative Member for Hitchin. It was not long before it became clear that he was something of a radical in home affairs. He was 'appalled at the Government's almost total indifference to the human aspects of unemployment, industrial relations, and agricultural decline';[14] his main contribution to these matters was his strong support for a comprehensive State-run system of social insurance. He saw the duty of a back-bench MP as being 'to say unpopular things that need saying'.[15] His view was that 'every Conservative is a reformer, most of them far more constructive and more ready to cut out dead wood than any Liberal, and few of them affected by the ideology of big business'.[16]

In 1934 he produced *Walks and Talks,* the first in a series of books recording the conversations and convictions of the people he talked to in the course of his travels. The public taste for such diary-like books had been whetted, in the previous year, by J. B. Priestley's *English Journey,* which in turn produced Philip Gibbs's 1934 *European Journey.* Wilson's aim, in this first book, was 'to present a faithful though, of course, inevitably superficial impression, interspersed with occasional reflections of my own, of the hopes and fears, work and play of the inhabitants of a large constituency'.[17] This he did, in what is still a remarkably readable book. People's opinions are given straight, usually without comment. Only occasionally do we get hints of the author's own attitude.

To the extent that foreign affairs were discussed, they naturally, in late 1933 and early 1934, related to the present state of Britain. A remarkable number of his interlocutors believed that a dictatorship was the solution for this country, because 'Mussolini and Hitler and Stalin and Roosevelt are doing something definite, right or wrong. We are drifting'.[18] On this matter Wilson allowed himself some of his rare interventions. 'I discouraged his Fascist leanings sternly,' he said of one such person. 'Democratic government was the most difficult, but the most worthy form of organisation for a civilized people … Ideas borrowed from abroad had never done us any good.'[19]

The experience of the countries under dictatorships was not particularly good, anyway: ‘Where was Germany? On the threshold of vast economic disorder of her own making.’

It was in May 1934 that Wilson made his first visit to Nazi Germany. This was succeeded by other, frequent visits to Germany, Italy and other European countries, all of which were recorded in articles for such journals as the *English Review* and *The Nineteenth Century and After.* These impressions were later gathered into books on the pattern of *Walks and Talks*, the first of which, *Walks and Talks Abroad*, came out in 1936.

The most striking thing about the record of the visits made in 1934 and 1935 is the absence of that violent pro-Nazism which has so often been ascribed to Wilson. At this stage, he was prepared to note people’s opinions and convictions without too much in the nature of comment. When he *did* comment, he appeared to have a strange mixture of admiration for certain aspects of the Nazi revolution, and repulsion for others.

He was impressed by Hitler, who ‘left on my mind an indelible impression of single-mindedness, with great reserves of strength’.[20] In conversation with Germans, however, he defended the Jews,[21] and also criticised Nazi regimentation: ‘I suggest to you … that in your enthusiasm you are mistaking uniformity for unity; and substituting subserviency for independence of mind. You are using the weapons of fear and hate to dominate the herd. Can it last? What will be left, in ten years’ time, of German philosophy and German science if your young men are subject to mass regimentation?’[22] When Wilson visited Dachau, he found that ‘there was in the atmosphere of the camp something against which my soul revolted’.[23] In relation to the Jewish question, he felt that ‘things were being done of which no reasonable person could approve … In this matter, at present, I see no light’.[24]

There were, on the other hand, many things to admire. ‘Hitler is at heart, like the best Socialists in all countries, profoundly Conservative in that he desires to conserve what is best. He trusts the people. He wishes to ensure to them a freer, wider life than they can now enjoy.’[25] The main disadvantages of the Nazi régime were not its ends, but its means. In a series of speeches to German audiences, Wilson stressed that Britain had been wanting good relations with Germany, but that the last two years had made this very difficult. Changes had occurred ‘which, however greatly needed in Germany and however good in themselves, were accompanied by acts which cannot be explained or defended in terms acceptable to any Englishman who is true to his native tradition – a harshness of outlook and action on racial matters and a presentation of the outlook of the new Germany which offended English ideas’. There was much to admire in the new Germany: ‘I admire the intense energy evoked by the National Socialist movement. I respect the patriotic ardour of German youth. I recognize, I almost envy, the depth and earnestness of the search for national unity which inspires your schools and colleges; because it is wholly unselfish, it is wholly good.’[26] The German nation had triumphed over enormous difficulties, and ‘raised the national morale against adverse winds to a height which makes me confident of the future of Europe of which Germany is the centre, and if it will learn moderation it will be the backbone’.[27] Moderation was all that was needed. The persecution of the Churches was, however, a danger. ‘With this spirit, if it develops, there can be no compromise … There is in Nazi doctrine and policy much that is true and good, much to inspire hope and confidence in the youth of the world. But if those in the party who seek to exclude the Churches from daily life prevail and the lower triumphs over the higher, then, in my belief, Europe is doomed as surely as if the Soviets, and not Hitler, had emerged victors from the last conflict.’[28]

Despite the complications of Wilson’s attitudes, it is small wonder that he was taken as a pro-Nazi in this country. A broadcast he made in May 1934 contained all his usual antitheses: ‘I have seen German youth displaying in work and play an energy and an enthusiasm which, because it is

wholly unselfish, is wholly good. Great dynamic forces have been developed…. It is not for us to criticize, or to condemn, but to understand. Foreign pressure, public denunciations, boycotts, these harden the heart and strengthen the position of those whose action is impugned.'[29] He gave an account of the conversations he had had, and of the German people's enthusiasm for the new régime. As in a later speech at Hamburg, he stated that 'there are things in the new Germany which we should do well to study, adapt and adopt'.[30]

Reactions to this broadcast were violent. The *Manchester Guardian* described it as 'the most consistent panegyric of the new régime that we have yet heard. Nowhere had Sir Arnold Wilson apparently met with one person who was dissatisfied … English listeners would perhaps be not strongly impressed one way or another by his conclusion that we should "study, adapt and adopt" much of the German method.'[31]

Be that as it may, Arnold Wilson was not, in this period, single-mindedly pro-German. He was aware of the defects of the régime, and his parliamentary speeches drew full attention to them. On 16 July 1935, for example, he said: 'I regard the more recent recrudescence of persecution of Jews in Germany and particularly the latest speech of Dr Goebbels with disgust and resentment.'[32]

It was to a large extent the European situation after 1936 which drove Wilson, like so many others, towards the desire for a German alliance. In 1935, when he took over the editorship of *The Nineteenth Century and After*, his main interest, as expressed by the line the journal took, was in Italy, and in justifying her war in Abyssinia. His speeches in Parliament, and his letters to *The Times*, were predominantly on this matter at that time. His attitude to Germany, on the other hand, was one of a desire for peace and friendship, an admiration for many aspects of the Nazi régime, but a deep anxiety about the external manifestations of repressive Nazi policies.

A major politician who was strongly impressed by Nazism at this stage, but whose main public statements on the matter were to come later, after a visit to Hitler in 1936, was Lloyd George. As his biographer Peter Rowland describes the Lloyd George of 1933, 'Lloyd George had an undisguised sympathy for the German leader which was gradually transformed, as the months went by, into an intense admiration. "Hitler", he continually remarked in private, "is a great man". The Führer was, after all, carrying out in Germany all the policies which he, Lloyd George, had wanted to implement in Britain: unemployment was being cured … the people were being settled on the land in their thousands …'[33] Maurice Cowling depicts him as considering Hitler to be 'the German equivalent of a Welsh Radical leading the Conservative party on the way to becoming a world statesman'.[34] Certainly Miss Stevenson's diary, in the 1934 period, shows Lloyd George's admiration for Hitler as a great man, while Lloyd George's correspondence shows his concern to blame Nazi persecution on other Nazis, and disculpate Hitler.[35] His public statements, at this stage, were, however, more circumspect: in a speech in the House of Commons he admitted, in late 1934, that it was 'very difficult to put the German case at the moment, because the German government have for the last eighteen months been doing their best to work up a bad Press against themselves … There is no sentiment that they do not seem to have set themselves to exasperate and outrage'. Nevertheless, he went on, 'do not let us be in a hurry to condemn Germany. We should be welcoming her as our friend', and as a bulwark against Communism.[36]

In these years, Hitler 'more than once invited him to Berlin'.[37] Finally, in 1936, Lloyd George was to go, as we shall see, and was to return as a public apologist for the Nazi régime.

The Press: Rothermere and Ward Price

The *Daily Mail* was the only major British daily to take a consistently pro-Nazi line. This was due, in large part, to the enthusiasm of its owner, Lord Rothermere. Rothermere's main central

European interest up to this time had been Horthy's Hungary, whose plea for a revision of the Treaty of Trianon he had strongly supported. He was, however, above all affected by a violent anti-Bolshevism; as Gannon puts it, 'Lord Rothermere was very near to being unbalanced on the issue of communism … His overriding fear was a communist invasion of England, against which event he set about preparing vast estates in central Hungary.'[38] It was this which caused him to take up so many contentious issues in the thirties, from Hitler to Mosley. Reactions to him ranged from Dawson's (the editor of *The Times*) view of him as 'a joke'[39] to the anger of a writer like A. J. Cummings at 'the crude confusion of the Rothermere mentality'.[40] As Cowling puts it, 'Rothermere had for long been treated as an oddity. In the thirties this impression was confirmed'.[41]

When Hitler became Chancellor on 30 January 1933, Rothermere produced a series of articles acclaiming the new régime. The most famous of these is the *Daily Mail* editorial of 10 July, 'Youth Triumphant', in which he declared that he 'confidently expected' great things of the Nazi régime. Hitting out at the rest of the British Press, with its obsession with Nazi violence and racialism, he assured his readers that any such deeds would be 'submerged by the immense benefits that the new régime is already bestowing on Germany'.[42] 'The sturdy young Nazis', he wrote in November, 'are Europe's guardians against the Communist danger.'[43] The *Sunday Dispatch*, another Rothermere newspaper, was similarly a base for pro-Nazi articles, including those of Colonel Thomas Moore.

Rothermere visited Hitler on a number of occasions, and corresponded with him. As we have seen, Hitler's first major dinner party for foreigners, on 19 December 1934, had as its guests of honour Rothermere, his son Esmond Harmsworth, and Ward Price, together with Ernest Tennant. Rothermere's subsequent article in the *Daily Mail* was violently enthusiastic about what Hitler had done for Germany.[44] Hitler wrote a number of important letters to Rothermere in 1933 and 1934, but the most interesting of them, because of its subsequent fate, was the one written on 3 May 1935 in which he advocated Anglo-German understanding as a firm combination for peace. Rothermere circulated this to many politicians, convinced that his personal contact with Hitler had produced a real breakthrough. Not many politicians were interested, however. The letter was also sent by Lady Snowden to the King, whose response, conveyed by Lord Wigram, was decidedly cold: 'The French are not mentioned in the letter from start to finish and it seems to me, reading between the lines, that Hitler's object is to form a block against the French and other countries in Europe, which is entirely contrary to our present Foreign Policy…. It came as a great surprise to me that Lord Rothermere was carrying on such a correspondence, and the King (who, as you know, is always most open with his Ministers and loyal to them) certainly thinks that the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary should read Hitler's letter.'[45]

Rothermere combined a belief in 'the importance of meeting the Nazi desire to be on good terms with Britain',[46] with 'an almost obsessional concern for British air rearmament'.[47] He was convinced of Hitler's *bona fides*, and impatient with those who demurred.

In all this a very important figure was his special correspondent, George Ward Price, who developed a fairly close relationship with Hitler, who regarded him as 'the only foreign journalist who reported him without prejudice'.[48] Jacobsen states that 'the famous special correspondent of the London *Daily Mail*, Ward Price, was welcomed to interviews in the Reich Chancellery in a more privileged way than all other foreign journalists, particularly when foreign countries had once more been brusqued by a decision of German foreign policy. His paper supported Hitler more strongly and more constantly than any other newspaper outside Germany.'[49]

Gannon describes Ward Price as being 'unlike his colleagues of the time … almost totally unideological. Although he was clearly impressed with what he considered the positive aspects of

Hitler's and Mussolini's régimes, he abhorred their brutality and excesses. Privately he held a deep conviction of the superiority of everything English, but as a reporter his interest was to get the best story.' For Gannon, it was 'to [the *Daily Mail*'s] credit' that it had 'the outstanding special correspondent of the 1930s'.[50]

This picture appears to some extent to be based on Ward Price's own later *apologia*, his autobiography *Extra-Special Correspondent*, which appeared in 1957. Gannon quotes his statement that 'I reported [Hitler's] statements accurately, leaving British newspaper readers to form their own opinions of their worth.'[51] A perusal of Ward Price's writings in the thirties gives a completely different impression.

This is because *Extra-Special Correspondent*, like so many other post-war memoirs, is completely misleading. Price's assessment of Hitler's personality is a good example of this: in 1957 we find him writing, 'The many meetings that I had with Hitler … always filled me with astonishment that a man of his neurotic character and limited perceptions should be able to maintain personal domination over a race possessing such varied and conspicuous qualities as the Germans.'[52] Yet, in his book, *I Know These Dictators*, which appeared in 1937, Price gave a thoroughly favourable picture of the man. 'Behind the forceful character which he displays in public', he had 'a human, pleasant personality.' He had 'the artistic, visionary tendencies of the South German type', and there was 'a strong strain of sadness and tenderness in his disposition'. Price found in his 'fondness for children and dogs' an 'evidence of good nature'. His 'personality and prestige' were so strong that 'without any effort on his part, he is surrounded … by much awe on the part of his entourage'.[53]

In 1957 Price was describing himself as having been surprised 'to see the deference displayed towards him by so many Germans who were his superiors in education, intellect and experience'.[54] In 1937 he had praised Hitler's intellect and abilities to the skies, describing him as 'a widely read man … familiar with the works of all the leading German philosophers', who had 'mastered the history, geography and social and economic conditions of the chief European countries'.[55]

The same pattern is to be found in relation to other matters. Price does not, in the thirties, appear to have 'abhorred' the 'brutality and excesses'[56] of the Nazis. On the contrary, he went out of his way to excuse them, and to-deny their excessive nature. 'To law-abiding citizens the Nazi Government brought public order, political peace, better living-conditions, and the promise, since fulfilled, to make Germany once more a great nation,' he wrote. 'Upon the people who opposed, or looked like opposing, its plans, it laid a heavy hand.' But this was essential. 'The jockey who pats his horse in the paddock may lash him in a hard finish. The rulers of Germany were stern because they believed the fate of their country was at stake. If they failed, the gates would be open wide to Bolshevism – the same bloodthirsty Bolshevism which had ravaged and "liquidated" in Russia, tortured and massacred in Hungary …'[57]

So Nazi methods 'were vigorous because their adversaries were ruthless and treacherous'. As a matter of fact, 'There were more people killed during the revolution in Ireland than in Germany, which has twenty times as many inhabitants.'[58] Great capital had been made by Germany's enemies out of the concentration-camps, about which 'gross and reckless accusations were made'. As for Nazi anti-Semitism, it was based on 'the conception that the German nation is in a state of siege … Anti-Jewish prejudice was strengthened by the part played by that race in the Communist uprising.' After the war, there had been a migration of Jews into Germany. The collapse of German currency 'gave the Jews of neighbouring countries a chance after their own heart to make big profits'. From the native German standpoint, the Jewish immigration was 'a danger to national culture, for foreign Jews brought with them no standards but those of cosmopolitan materialism …

And while these meaner elements of the Jewish race were exploiting German depression, the intelligentsia of the same stock was getting a stranglehold on the learned professions.' So it was that 'the tolerant attitude of the average Anglo-Saxon … towards Jews, Communists, and those deluded intellectuals indulgently termed "parlour-Bolshevists" appears to Nazi eyes as stupid apathy in the presence of real danger'.[59]

As far as Anglo-German relations were concerned, Price believed, until very late in the day, that Hitler could be taken to be sincere. Lack of understanding was caused by the fact that, in Britain, the Press, 'instead of putting national interest first', was 'dominated by a set of vague and visionary principles'.[60] On this basis, 'undeterred by imperfect knowledge of the facts, societies of British busybodies have acquired the habit of passing votes of censure on foreign Governments whose views are not in harmony with their own'.[61] Price contrasted the advantages of dictatorship with the drawbacks of democracy. If only Hitler's proffered hand had been taken on the occasions when it was offered, 'Europe might now be on a safer path than the precipitous slope of rearmament which may ultimately lead to the abyss of war.'[62]

Price was a realist in one sense. He saw that war was possible, even probable. In such circumstances, he followed the Rothermere line of calling for rearmament, even though negotiations should properly be undertaken to avoid war.[63]

The turning-point, for Price as for so many others, was to be the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia in March 1939.

Rothermere and Ward Price, then, used the *Daily Mail*, up to 1938, as an instrument of Nazi propaganda. As Gannon points out, there was little news coverage of Germany in that paper (compared with the extensive coverage in other papers), and opinions on Germany were expressed mainly through editorials and reports of Ward Price's interviews. As the thirties wore on, the paper's main concern turned gradually from positive praise of Nazism to a concern to avoid Continental obligations.

The rest of the press was, on the whole, less definite in its views. Beaverbrook, 'having first despised and then admired the Nazi régime', had been 'alienated by its violence, and had come to dislike it for "regimenting" opinion, supporting the aristocracy, and persecuting the Lutheran Church'.[64] Under him the *Daily Express* was basically isolationist, however, as were its stablemates the *Evening Standard* and the *Sunday Express*; though individual articles on Germany from time to time appeared in them, they denoted no particular line of editorial policy. The rest of the press, in the early years of the Nazi régime, ranged between firm opposition, careful fence-sitting, and sheer lack of interest. It was not until Germany's foreign policy forced itself on British attention in the late thirties that more precise attitudes came to be formulated.

London Society: Mrs Greville and Lady Cunard

There is no doubt that, from an early date, the European dictatorships had an aura of glamour for certain members of London's high society. Two of London's great hostesses, Lady Cunard and Mrs Ronnie Greville, were bowled over by Nazism – though, to stress the impossibility of making generalisations on this basis, it must be said that Lady Colefax, another great hostess, was sternly anti-Nazi, even in 1936, when so much of British society was won over by Nazi propaganda.

Mrs Greville was the more single-minded of the two. The daughter of William McEwan, the brewer and MP, she had married Captain the Hon. Ronald Greville, who died in 1908. In 1922 she had been made a Dame of the British Empire. Rumour had it that Sir John Simon was devoted to her, and that he would have married her, but for the fact that he was 'afraid she might spoil his chances of becoming Prime Minister'.[65] Her salon was scintillating, but she herself, despite her

brilliant wit (her 'mots' were repeated around London), was too malicious for some. 'Chips' Channon might declare with admiration that 'there is no one on earth quite so skilfully malicious as old Maggie',[66] but Harold Nicolson saw her as 'nothing more than a fat slug filled with venom'.[67]

In 1934 she went to Nuremberg, and came back 'full of enthusiasm for Hitler'.[68] This soon became the talk of London society,[69] and she herself talked long and loud at dinner-parties on the subject. 'She is a convinced pro-German and is very angry that no one from the British Embassy went to the *Parteitag* at Nuremberg', noted Bruce Lockhart. 'After all, the British Ambassador in Moscow attends the May 1st and November 7th celebrations in Moscow.'[70] Such talk may seem harmless, but it is less so when we remember that it was reputed that 'her influence is very strong with Simon' (who was then Foreign Minister), and that 'in those countries where she is not given a special train, the local British ambassador or minister gets sacked'.[71] These details were no doubt exaggerated, but their basis, the close relationship between Maggie Greville and Sir John Simon, remains true, and is rather disconcerting. Mrs Greville's pro-Germanism continued through 1936, as we can see from accounts of her dinner-parties.

Emerald Cunard was the widow of Sir Bache Cunard. Hers was very much a literary and musical salon, and the centre of her life was her close friendship with Sir Thomas Beecham. She was, says Lady Ravensdale, the 'Queen of Covent Garden' when Sir Thomas was its musical director.[72] An American, she was 'like a twittering, bejewelled bird'. Though witty, 'her kindness was proverbial',[73] wrote Channon. One is left, nevertheless, with a rather empty-headed, superficial impression from all the diary entries of different diarists of the period. Pro-Nazism seems to have been part of that superficiality. In 1933, when Nazism was new, she was 'pro-Hitler', and arranged to go to Germany. Lockhart, observing this, expected that she might 'come back with changed views'.[74] In 1935 we find her, at a dinner party, 'trying to tease the Foreign Office boys by being violently pro-Mussolini'.[75] In the same year she was described as being 'rather éprise with Herr Ribbentrop' and having, through Mrs Simpson, affected the Prince of Wales with pro-Nazism. 'If only the Chancelleries of Europe', wrote Channon, 'knew that his [British Legion] speech was the result of Emerald Cunard's intrigues, themselves inspired by Herr Ribbentrop's dimple!'[76] The rumours of influence were almost certainly wrong; as we shall see, there were many possible reasons for the Prince's pro-Nazism. Lady Cunard's attitude to Ribbentrop was, however, clear: a mixture of flattery and being flattered, and a delight at having 'the arch-Hitler spy of Europe' in her social circle.

Were these hostesses of any real influence? In late 1935 the French author and painter, Paul Maze, storming 'against the stupidity of Englishwomen like Emerald (who is American!) and Maggie Greville', asked Bruce Lockhart 'if it were possible that they could have any influence', saying that in France when women interfered in politics 'they were at least intelligent, had read books, and had slept with diplomats. And to sleep with M. Briand one had to have a certain amount of intelligence'.[77] Four years later, Harold Nicolson, in his diary, gave his view on this question. 'The harm which these silly selfish hostesses give is immense', he wrote. 'They convey to foreign envoys the impression that policy is decided in their own drawing-rooms.' Yet no intelligent diplomat could really believe 'that the will-power of the country is concentrated in Mrs Ronald Greville'. Nevertheless such people had a subversive influence. 'They wine and dine our younger politicians and they create an atmosphere of authority and responsibility and grandeur, whereas the whole thing is a mere flatulence of the spirit.'[78]

Other hostesses were later to play a significant part in Anglo-German relations – not least Lady Londonderry and Lady Astor. In the years 1933–5, however, London society was not centrally interested in these things.

A number of individual members were impressed by the Nazi régime. They found some excitement in visiting Germany, and then enthralled their listeners with accounts of the way in which they were 'received by Ribbentrop, Hitler, and escorted everywhere by Storm Troopers'.[79] Such people's subsequent political views show, however, how little emphasis one must place on these things in the 1933–5 situation. Germany was a kind of 'tourist attraction', with the Nazis adding some spurious excitement.

The Mitford family

The Mitford family are a different matter entirely. Eccentric, spoiled and idiosyncratic, three of the daughters of Lord Redesdale went to political extremes – Unity and Diana to the Right, Jessica to the Left.

David Pryce-Jones's book on Unity Mitford gives much of the background, and depicts the psychological needs which led these *enfants terribles* into their varying political paths.[80] Neglected yet spoiled, seeking for recognition and love, filled with a sense of social superiority and at the same time feelings of helpless inferiority, Unity Mitford was fair game for any leader who made her feel wanted, and for any movement which allowed her to shock and alienate the lesser breeds around her.

The saga all started in 1932, the year in which Unity came out. Her sister, Diana, Mrs Bryan Guinness, was a leading hostess for the younger set; at the ball she gave for Unity, on 7 July, 'the guests could not fail to draw conclusions … from the presence of Sir Oswald Mosley and the attention he paid to Diana: the two were *affiché*, visibly so'.[81]

Through her sister, Unity met Mosley on a number of occasions. The fact that 'the Redesdales had warned Unity off Diana', notes Pryce-Jones 'must have served to increase her disposition to admire Mosley'. From June 1933 onwards, she was committed to Fascism, 'though her thoughts were far from high-flown or ideological, the Fascist movement simply sounding great fun to her'.[82]

Though official BUF party policy, in this period, was not specifically pro-German, there were nevertheless, as we have seen, elements within the membership which had a particular admiration for Nazism; and the party showed fellow-feeling with all 'Fascist' movements in Europe. Naturally enough, representatives were sent to the 1933 Nuremberg Rally, the first since Nazi accession to power. Significantly, neither Mosley nor Forgan was there. Even more significantly, Unity Mitford, an enthusiastic but very new member (described by Lady Makgill as being 'played … down' by Mosley, and as not having 'much involvement in the BUF'), succeeded in getting a place as an official representative. Other representatives included William Joyce, Alexander Raven Thomson, and Captain Vincent.

'Nazism was to provide her with a bigger and better leader', writes Pryce-Jones. By May 1934 Unity was ensconced in Munich, at a finishing-school run by Baroness Laroche, one of the many former aristocrats who let their family houses to young well-connected British men and women in Munich in these years. Unity had 'begged' her parents 'to be allowed to go to Germany'.[83] Her 'announced intention was to go to Germany, learn German, and meet the Führer'. This she did by reserving a nightly table in the Osteria Bavaria restaurant, which Hitler often used.

'No one could sit long in the same room as Miss Unity Mitford without noticing her', wrote George Ward Price. 'Her golden hair, fair skin and blue eyes attain the highest standard of that Nordic beauty which Germans especially admire.[84] Though Price is here gilding the lily a little, it is true that one evening Hitler invited her to join his table, and thereafter she became one of his circle, accompanying the Nazi leaders to 'meetings, rallies, the Olympic Games'.[85] On her return

to England Unity gave much outward expression to her new enthusiasm: 'The Nazi salute – "Heil Hitler!" with hand upraised – became her standard greeting to everyone, family, friends, the astonished postmistress in Swinbrook village. Her collection of Nazi trophies and paraphernalia now overflowed our little sitting-room – bundles of Streicher's anti-Semitic paper, *Der Stürmer*; an autographed copy of *Mein Kampf*; the works of Houston Stuart [*sic*] Chamberlain … albums of photographs of Nazi leaders.'[86]

Diana, who had accompanied Unity to the 1934 Rally, came to Munich in October and November 1934, and took a flat. She returned on other occasions. Soon Diana, too, was 'admitted to the Nazi inner circle'. Ward Price depicts, in his book *I Know These Dictators*, the Führer's delight whenever he saw the sisters. 'Since they spend much time in Germany, they are in frequent touch with him … There is no more human trait in Hitler's character than the pleasure he takes in the light-hearted company of these typical young Englishwomen of today.'[87]

In October 1936 Diana married Oswald Mosley secretly in Berlin, an occasion at which the Goebbelses gave a lunch which Hitler attended. Thanks to very strict orders that no news was to leak out about Mosley's visit to Germany,[88] the marriage was not known in England. Mosley, Skidelsky tells us, 'says that Berlin was the only place where he could get married without the Press hearing about it: an advantage of totalitarianism'.[89]

Unity's relationship with Hitler has often been described as one of infatuation. Rumours abounded that she was having a love affair with him in the late thirties, but these were almost certainly untrue. The words of one of her cousins strikes one as nearer the mark: 'Unity does not hope to marry Hitler. It is merely adoration. Hitler likes her because of her fanaticism. She wants the Jews to be made to eat grass.'90 When in London, she continued to make her views known. Bruce Lockhart, who met her at a lunch at General Sir Ian Hamilton's, commented that she was 'madly pro-Nazi and will not speak to her sister Nancy because she is anti-Nazi'.[91] She continued to wear a swastika badge in public, which caused a number of incidents. At the outbreak of war she attempted to commit suicide in Munich, and was sent back to England, where she died of her wound a few years later.

Unity Mitford's case would merely seem a cause for sadness, rather than of any importance to a study of Anglo-German relations. This was an individual, rather than a type. One must not forget, however, that through her Hitler often got a distorted view of British opinion and intentions, to which he lent some credence.[92] And one must also remember that, partly through her and Diana, their father, Lord Redesdale, became strongly influenced by Nazi propaganda.

Lord Redesdale, the 'Uncle Matthew' of his daughter Nancy's novel *The Pursuit of Love*, was the son of the English translator of Houston Stewart Chamberlain. Though basically against all 'foreigners', he was temperamentally inclined towards many of the attitudes taken up by Nazism. As his daughters insisted, while trying to get him and their mother to go to Germany, 'Farve is really one of Nature's Fascists. He'd simply *love* the Führer.'[93] The Redesdales visited Germany: 'Muv and Farve were given a royal time in Germany. They were lent a chauffeur-driven Mercedes-Benz and shown all the gaudy trappings of the new régime, and they returned full of praise for what they had seen.'[94] Lord Redesdale was thereafter to be a constant spokesman for friendship and understanding with Germany, objecting to Britain's 'persistently un-English treatment of Germany',[95] and describing Hitler as 'a right-thinking man of irreproachable sincerity and honesty', who was 'in the life he leads and in all that he does, an example they [the Germans] can be proud to follow'. A member of the Anglo-German Fellowship, and later of the Link, Redesdale was to remain unrepentantly pro-Nazi right up to the war, as was his wife.

The Mitfords were an eccentric family, admittedly, but in their flamboyant way they reflected many of the obscure psychological, political and social motives which were to affect certain

sections of the British aristocracy, particularly amid the wave of pro-Germanism which occurred from 1936 onwards.

Bishop Headlam

If we turn to the Church, we will find that here, too, there are few generalisations to be made. While a number of the lesser clergy were bowled over by Mosley's movement, and some were frequent contributors to its journals,96 Edward Norman is on the whole right in thinking that 'for the clergy of the Church of England, Fascism had almost no appeal'.[97] As far as Nazi Germany was concerned, the persecution of the Jews, and even more the persecution of the Churches, turned most of the English clergy away. There were, of course, exceptions, not limited to an eccentric like the Revd M. Yate Allen, a future member of the Link who, in 1936, described the Nazi party as 'Christian throughout', and the 'moral work being done' as 'splendid', as one of the main Nazi objects was 'to overthrow the schemes of the atheistic Bolsheviks and Communists'. For Allen, though 'theologians may differ as to the rights and wrongs of the new sterilisation laws', it was surely 'debatable whether this is a worse offence against ancient Church dogmas than the licensing of prostitution, which is permitted in several Catholic countries'.[98] Another eccentric, the Revd Geoffrey Dymock of St Bede's, Bristol, wrote of the 'ominous signs of approaching Armageddon, definitely fomented and encouraged by Bolshevik Jewry', and described Germany as 'having succeeded in extricating itself from the Laocoon toils of a foul slavery to international finance'.[99]

Arthur Headlam, Bishop of Gloucester, was a completely different matter. A scholar of Winchester and of New College, with a First Class in Greats, he had, after being a Prize Fellow of All Souls, become successively Principal of King's College, London and Regius Professor of Divinity in Oxford. On his appointment to the Bishopric of Gloucester in 1924, he had simultaneously become a Fellow of All Souls. He was a leading churchman, of a conservative tinge in relation to social matters, who was totally opposed to the social relativism of many of his contemporaries. In his pronouncements on these matters we see a belief that capitalism was in the best interests of the working man, and that the social experiments which led inexorably to communism would produce the same situation as existed in Russia, where 'the creed of the German-Jew has been quite successful', but with no less misery for the working classes, merely greater misery for the wealthy.100

We have already seen Headlam's views on Nazi anti-Semitism.[101] His views on Germany itself, in 1933, were affected by a vision of 'what we should do in this country if we had a real imminent fear of Bolshevism. I think we should do a great many things which would deserve criticism'. The British, in his view, were not treating Germany fairly. It had 'become the fashion to tell us only those things which are discreditable, to misrepresent the German motives, to attack them in every way'. He, on the other hand, had 'many friends whose testimony I can trust who have been in Germany in the last few months', and 'they all alike tell me the contrary'. The people were happy in Germany for the first time since the war. Berlin had been cleaned up in a remarkable way. 'The great body of the young Nazis is the best element in the country, anxious for self-discipline and sacrifice.' No doubt there were some unpleasant facets, but revolution produces such things, and 'we should try to estimate the position fairly'.[102] After all, similar things had happened before the Nazi takeover, committed by Communists. 'A state something like civil war existed.'[103]

All these statements by Headlam were made in 1933, long before the contact made with him by Rosenberg, *via* Archdeacon Hodson, in late 1934, and his correspondence with Rosenberg in 1935. Headlam, in Edward Norman's words, 'maintained his position until the outbreak of war, when events overtook his optimism about the true intentions of the German Government'.104

Headlam, for all his eminence, was untypical of most of Britain's leading Churchmen. Many were, it is true, taken in by Hitler's protestations of well-meaning sincerity in the early stages, but some changed their views when they realised the truth behind the mask. A. S. Duncan-Jones, Dean of Chichester, for example, at the height of British worries about Hitler's attitude to the German churches, went to Germany, interviewed Hitler, and on his return published in *The Times*, on 7 July 1933, a letter which was a straightforward account of Hitler's protestations as to his intentions, with the additional information that he had been assured that 'all parties in the Church were cooperating in the negotiations that were taking place'.[105] This letter, incidentally, appeared to pull the ground from underneath a very powerful letter written to *The Times* only four days before by his own Bishop, George Bell of Chichester, on 'the struggle for freedom' in the German Church.[106] Duncan-Jones, however, soon learned his mistake, as did other well-meaning churchmen.

A certain *naïveté* in relation to political matters is not unknown among the clergy. During the thirties, a tendency to try to 'see the best' in the German régime was not uncommon, and led to such experiments as the Anglo-German Brotherhood.[107] Most participants in such matters were, however, innocents rather than active and positive proponents of the German régime. Headlam was in a different class altogether, both by his intellect and by his rational justification of his opinions, as we shall see later in the thirties.

Wyndham Lewis

In the field of literature, the examples of pro-Nazism were, as in the Church, idiosyncratic rather than typical, in this period. The earliest and most prominent figure was Wyndham Lewis, who in 1931, before the Nazi rise to power, wrote a book entitled *Hitler,* in which he expressed great enthusiasm for the new movement. From the start, it was clear that what appealed to him was the extremeness, indeed illogicality, of much of Nazism, 'a fiery fusion of all that is most outrageous to the mind of the sober, tolerant, democratic average'.[108] The averageness and mediocrity of British democracy made him turn to totalitarianism; his hatred for Marinetti and the Italian Futurists had, in a typically Wyndham Lewis way, turned him against Italian Fascism;[109] Hitlerism now seemed a true object for admiration, even if, in the first pages of his book, he claimed to be 'an exponent', and not a 'critic' or an 'advocate' of the new movement.

Wyndham Lewis's ascetic disapproval of what he saw as the moral decline of the age was one of the main causes for his sympathy with Hitler. Berlin, after all, was an extreme example of this decline, with 'the public orgasms of the night-life *Bankleute,*'[110] the 'glitter and nigger-hubbub',[111] the 'Bars and Dancings, with their Kaffir bands'[112] and all its many perversions, which made of it 'the Pervert's Paradise'. Hitler had come as 'the ascetic of Politics',[113] who hoped to clean all this up. To Lewis, this in some respects justified Nazi race-consciousness. He was aware of the 'disintegration of our Western society' which was in part related to 'the romantic, luxurious sensationalism that caused Charles Baudelaire to acquire a mulatto mistress, and that enables the Theatrical, Musical and other Impresarios to put over all the negro-stuff that literally swamps America at this minute'.[114] Western Europe should turn to protection against these things:

> Such a way of feeling has caused [the Germans] to resist the jazz-culture and a hundred other things, in a manner that would have been quite impossible in an anglo-saxon country. But can we any longer deny that the German belief in the necessity of a Central, Western, unified culture, and the necessity of an acuter and more jingo, if you like, race-consciousness on the part of all White Western Peoples, has something to be said for it?[115]

Anti-Semitism was difficult to justify, but easy to explain, as it was the 'old man of the sea of the politics of *Mitteleuropa*'.[116] German anti-Semitism should not affect British attitudes towards Germany.

For Lewis, Nazism summed up enthusiasm, asceticism, and a non-Communist attack on the *Geldmensch* and the evils of the capitalist system. Hitler was basically a 'man of peace' and 'not a sabre-rattler at all'.[117] These views continued well after the Nazi rise to power, but, in a typically Lewis turnaround, in 1939 he was to produce an attack on Hitler entitled *The Hitler Cult*, and an attack on anti-Semitism entitled *The Jews: Are they human?*

If Wyndham Lewis's support for Nazism, though idiosyncratic, was explicable by many of his strong previously-held opinions, Henry Williamson's was, as we have seen, based on the experience of the First World War, and the companionship of the trenches. This is true, too, of Edmund Blunden, the war poet, whose main statements on the matter came later in the thirties, but who was already affected by the same feelings.[118]

Admiral Sir Barry Domvile

Perhaps the most unusual individual to be drawn to Germany in these years was Admiral Sir Barry Domvile, later to be famous as the founder of the Link. Domvile had been Director of Naval Intelligence until 1930, in command of the 3rd Cruiser Squadron in the Mediterranean from 1931 to 1932, and President of the Royal Naval College at Greenwich from 1932 to 1934. In 1934 he was knighted. He joined the retired list in 1936, at the age of 58, and produced in the same year a book entitled *By and Large*, an autobiography. In it he described, in Chapter 10, a visit he had made to Germany in 1935.

In 1935 Domvile was not the single-minded believer in 'Judmas', the Jewish masonic plot, that he was to become under the effects of his imprisonment in 1940 under the 18B Regulations. As he said in his later book, *From Admiral to Cabin Boy* (1947), 'At this time I had not succeeded in getting Judmas into proper focus, and I was greatly mystified by the discrepancy between fact and fiction, as served up to British breakfast tables.'[119]

One of Domvile's greatest concerns in these years, as witnessed by his letters to the papers,[120] was the rights of the motorist, and it is fascinating to see the priority this matter gets among his first impressions of Germany:

> I am a great believer in first impressions and some of my earliest in Germany made me wonder whether England is really quite so much a land of the free as we are all so fond of bucking about. In many respects poor oppressed Nazi Germany is much better off. To start with, you can drive your car at any speed that your reason considers safe, without the ever-present fear which haunts one over here of attracting the undesired attentions of a disguised policeman, intent on victims. There are no speed limits in Germany. Even in Berlin you can park your car pretty well where you please.[121]

Domvile hated pub closing hours, bureaucratic Customs restrictions, and all 'our increasing servitudes in recent years'. The freedom in Germany was 'remarkable'[122] – though of course it was not so good for Jews. 'The bees in Nazi bonnets are Jews, Freemasons and Communists whose activities they assert to be inextricably interwoven.'[123] Domvile was not completely convinced about the masons, and merely reported the Nazi views. He did not believe strongly in the communist threat. As far as the Jews were concerned, his views appear to have been very muddled.

'We told Himmler', he wrote, 'that we thought the huge banners across the roads at the entrances to the villages, saying that Jews were not wanted there … were in bad taste and gave great and unnecessary offence to the large numbers of foreign tourists then in the country.'[124] A later comment

shows, however, the division in Domvile's thought: 'The Nazis have treated the Jews with great harshness and tactlessness, thereby alienating the sympathy of other countries, but I am very far from adopting the sloppy sentimental attitude towards the Jewish race which is so popular in this country. Because we ourselves are tolerant of the aliens and Jews in our midst to the point of stupidity, that is no reason for our being so intolerant with the policy of others, as well as with their method of conducting it.'125

Domvile then proceeded to describe the treatment of the Jews in America, and Jewish business methods in this country: 'Jewish ways are not our ways, neither are their thoughts our thoughts … We do not get a large number of Jews, or even Christianised Jews, in the Navy. We have Jacob's ladders at sea, but not many Jacobs going up them.'126 It was 'only because the Jews have so thoroughly impregnated big business and the Press in this country' that 'we make such a song about their treatment in Germany'. There was no affection for the Jews 'in our middle and lower classes', and 'if we were not such a tolerant race there would have been trouble long ago'. Domvile had 'a number of Jewish friends whom I like very much', but this did not carry him 'as far in mawkish sentiment as some of our papers go when sitting in judgment on the Nazis'.127

Yet, in the same breath, Domvile stated how the fact that the Nazis harried the Jews for being Jews 'rouses our tolerant spirit'.128 He seems to have been divided, at this stage, between a natural anti-Semitism and a desire to attract his public to Nazi Germany by taking on liberal attitudes, and trying to explain away Nazi anti-Semitism. The resultant mixture is bewildering.

What is interesting is that, in 1935 and 1936, Domvile showed little sign of fearing a danger from Jews, Masons, or Communists for Germany, but felt that 'the principal danger confronting the Nazi movement is internal dissension among the leaders'. Goebbels and Streicher should be removed, while Himmler, who was keen on improving good relations with Britain, should be retained.

Domvile had met Himmler both at his villa and on a shooting-party in the Bavarian Alps. He was most impressed by this man 'of a quiet and unassuming disposition', with 'a charming personality', who 'wears glasses and in appearance might be a benevolent professor', but who as head of the Gestapo and the SS wielded an enormous amount of power.129 He had helped Hitler to raise their fellow-countrymen from despondency to self-respect.

The most impressive moment of Domvile's stay was his visit to the Adolf Hitler SS Regiment, 'the pick of the SS Army', full of men of 'splendid physique', 'brought up with high patriotic ideals', who were to be 'a nucleus of the future Germanic race', and who were 'doing their best in that direction already', being 'responsible for eight hundred little Nazis in one year, which were looked after by the authorities if the mothers were true Aryans'.130

Wherever he went, Domvile was fêted. At lunch with the officers of the Adolf Hitler Regiment, speeches of good fellowship were made. He took the salute at a march-past in Berlin. He made the statutory visit to Dachau, where he decided that 'the administration … is excellent'.131 All in all, it was a successful visit for all concerned.

Domvile is an unusual figure, but it has been important to assess his views at this stage, because of the prominence he was to achieve later.

Tennant and the Anglo-German Fellowship – a new departure in late 1935

Ernest Tennant was a merchant banker of impeccable social standing, a cousin of Margot, Lady Oxford. His friendship with Ribbentrop flowered between 1932 and 1938, years in which he spent an extensive amount of time in Germany on business. He was a prominent pro-German spokesman, and at the same time an assiduous contacter of the great and the powerful on behalf of Ribbentrop.

In 1933 Tennant had been extremely impressed by the changes that had been wrought in Germany. Though he realised that there had been 'deplorable excesses', these were excusable by the situation in which Germany had been. 'Liberal ideas and public freedom of thought and speech are to some extent luxuries', he told his audience at Ashridge Conservative College, 'in that they require a certain minimum standard of living in which to exist. The general standard of living in Germany has sunk below that level … For fifteen years life for millions in Germany has been a grim struggle for survival.' Added to this, there had been a serious threat of a Communist takeover. 'Hitler was only just in time.' This explained some of the excesses. 'You cannot crush armed Communism with gloved hands … When accusing the Nazis of wanton brutality it must be remembered that the alternative – a Communist revolution – might have been worse.'

While claiming merely to be 'explaining' the Hitler movement, Tennant deplored the fact that 'World opinion seems to be concentrated on discussing and exaggerating the bad in the Hitler movement and ignoring the good'. The Jewish problem was deplorable, admittedly, but 'our Press should pay more attention to the constructive side of the Hitler movement'.

There were two alternatives to Hitlerism, both of them out of the question. 'One is Allied reoccupation of Germany by armed force – the second is civil war and chaos followed by Bolshevism.' Hitler did not want war, and 'we are close neighbours and near kinsmen of the Germans', who individually often liked them. We should take up a firm friendship with them.[132]

In 1934 Tennant accompanied a trade delegation to Germany, and 'was greatly interested to observe the surprise and change of viewpoint that came over most of the British delegation as a result of the personal contacts they made'. Several of them, before leaving London, had been 'extremely hostile to Germany', but these views were soon changed. Tennant became convinced of the value of such contacts, and, he says, 'it was decided on returning to London to form and finance the start of the Anglo-German Fellowship'.[133]

This body was eventually formed at the end of 1935. The extent to which the original idea for it was purely British must be in doubt. It fitted extremely well into Ribbentrop's scheme for joint societies with other countries, which would 'serve the cause of public relations'.[134] The AGF's twin, the 'Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft', was one of a series of parallel institutions with other countries. Given Tennant's close relationship with Ribbentrop at this time, the genesis of the idea may possibly be taken to lie with Ribbentrop.

The AGF aimed, above all, at the rich and the powerful. It proudly and publicly claimed, among its members, fifty members of both Houses of Parliament, three directors of the Bank of England, and 'many generals, admirals, bishops and bankers'. As Mr Elwin Wright, the Secretary, said in a newspaper interview shortly after its formation, 'it isn't numbers that matter. We want "Names", otherwise how can we have any influence with the Government or the Foreign Office?'[135]

Views of the Anglo-German Fellowship have differed. At one extreme we have the *News Review*, which described it as containing 'distinguished representatives of British Big Business, who claim Hitler has an "unanswerable case", who plan to set up a lavishly equipped Club in London at which Nazi-ism can be preached, Ministers of National-Socialism entertained, fêted'.[136] On the other extreme we find Sir Assheton Pownall, MP, who claimed that it 'exists only to promote good relations between us and Germany'.[137] The truth, as always, lies somewhere between the two. The Anglo-German Fellowship obviously served German propaganda purposes, but on the other hand it was never rabidly pro-Nazi. Its first brochure declared that it was 'non-political', and that membership did 'not imply approval of National Socialism', though the Fellowship 'does ask of its members cooperation in the work of establishing contacts and removing causes of misunderstanding'.[138] A later Annual Report qualified this by saying that though its principal purpose was 'to promote fellowship between the two peoples', it was true to say that 'however much such a purpose is non-political its fulfilment must inevitably have important consequences on policy'.[139] The Fellowship was, above all, a society of businessmen who, while not necessarily

approving of all that went on in Germany, wished to maintain and improve commercial contacts.

It was possible for people to belong to this body perfectly innocently, in the belief that they were merely furthering Anglo-German friendship. A glance at the membership list shows this. A large number of the MPs are not on record as having made any public pro-Nazi pronouncements, and some of the names (e.g. Clement Davies) are completely unlikely. There were a large number of sharks lurking among the shallows, however, and the speeches made at the dinners of the society, as well as outside statements made by such members, make it clear that the Fellowship was serving a purpose, that of making Nazi Germany respectable. As Simon Haxey put it: 'At meetings of the Anglo-German Fellowship leading Nazis advertise the merits of Germany's internal and foreign policy; the Society recommends and advertises the writings of Nazi politicians; it shows and advertises Fascist films; it arranges a "German Educationalist'' to address teachers in this country; it arranges invitations for its members to attend the Nazi Congress at Nuremberg.'[140]

Tennant and Conwell-Evans were leading members. The Chairman was Lord Mount Temple. On the Council were Lord Arnold, Lord Eltisley, Lord Hollenden, F. C. Tiarks (Governor of the Bank of England), Lt.-Col. Sir Thomas Moore, MP, Lt.-Col. Sir Assheton Pownall, MP, and Norman J. Hulbert, MP. Other important members included Lords Brocket, Londonderry, Lothian, McGowan, Mottistone, Nuffield, Redesdale and Sempill, the Earl of Glasgow, the Duke of Wellington, Sir Ernest Bennett, MP, Sir Alfred Knox, MP, Admiral Sir Murray Sueter, MP, Admiral Sir Barry Domvile, Sir Harry Brittain, and a good number of merchant bankers and City businessmen.

Lord Mount Temple was 'an officer and gentleman of the old school, who regarded socialism as subversion'.[141] As Wilfrid Ashley, he had been Minister of Transport from 1924 to 1929. In his position as President of the Anglo-German Fellowship, he proceeded to make a series of statements, the first of which appears to have been almost unpremeditated, though it provided the pattern for his later statements. At the inaugural banquet on 5 December 1935 he said, 'after a long eulogy of traditional friendship between England and Germany': 'We know Germany fought fair, and I hope that in the next war – well, I mustn't say what I was going to say!'[142] Seven months later, at another dinner of the Fellowship, his speech followed the same pattern: 'If another war comes – well, I must not say what I was going to say – I hope the partners will be changed.'[143]

Other speeches by Mount Temple went still further. Welcoming Field Marshal von Blomberg on 14 May 1937, he described him as 'an outstanding figure of the new Germany', who had 'helped to build up for Germany the means of self-defence which a vindictive treaty (applause) attempted to take away'. Blomberg had helped to change all that, and had 'created what any impartial historian must regard as essential to a "Great Nation"; Self-Respect and World Equality'.[144] In July 1937 he criticised the press for making 'little or no attempt … to describe any of the constructive efforts of the Hitler régime in the social sphere'. News, he said, had been 'highly selective'.[145]

The Anglo-German Fellowship contained a number of pro-Nazi enthusiasts. It is not significant for that, but rather for the fact that so many perfectly moderate people in high positions in government, commerce and industry could innocently belong, from late 1935 onwards, to a body which went over and beyond the mere desire for friendship. This factor makes of the Anglo-German Fellowship part of the strong shift to pro-Germanism which took place around 1936.

Conclusion

There were many individual admirers of the Nazi régime in the 1933–5 period, but little in the way of a coherent grouping of these enthusiasms, such as we find from late 1935 onwards. The British public, at the advent of the Nazis, had been pulled by conflicting emotional forces; sympathy for Germany's past treatment, and distaste for Nazism's more unpleasant attributes. Which place each individual took in the spectrum of possible opinions depended on a whole range of factors. The

unifying characteristic of this early period is, however, the lack of urgency in these matters, except for a small minority of the British public.

For many people, the concern was to find some kind of 'explanation' for the apparently incomprehensible unpleasantness of certain Nazi policies. Vernon Bartlett, who was to become, later in the thirties, a violent campaigner against Nazi Germany, is a good example of the kind of well-meaning approach favoured by many in 1933. In his book *Nazi Germany Explained* words like 'explanation', 'understanding', *etc.* recur again and again: 'Brutality can never be excused, but sometimes it can be explained,' he wrote. 'Nobody can hope to understand what is happening in Germany to-day unless he remembers that country's history since the war.'[146] He declared the aims of his book as being 'to give an objective account of the German Revolution', and 'to plead for a little more patience and understanding on our part before we set ourselves up to judge it'.[147] Indeed, in his desire 'to dissipate the sort of misunderstandings which lead to war' he had 'sought for explanations of much that disgusts me and fills me with despair'.[148]

It was possible to take such a central position in 1933–5. By 1936 this was no longer possible. Men like Bartlett turned to strong opposition to the Nazi régime. Others joined the ranks of the 'enthusiasts'. These stronger, and conflicting, attitudes became the norm rather than the exception. As we shall see in the next section, it was not necessarily any change in the Nazi régime which caused this crystallisation of opinions, but the international situation, in which Nazi Germany now seemed called to fill a significant position.

1 See Gracchus, *Your M.P.*, p. 23.
2 *Hansard*, 6 Feb. 1934.
3 *Hansard*, 31 May 1935.
4 See p. 54.
5 *Sunday Dispatch*, 27 Oct. 1933, quoted in Haxey, op. cit., p. 236.
6 *Sunday Dispatch*, 22 Oct. 1933, quoted in Haxey, op. cit., p. 196.
7 'Give Hitler a Chance', 18 Feb. 1934, quoted in Haxey, op. cit., p. 196.
8 Foreign Affairs Debate, *Hansard*, 31 July 1936.
9 *Hansard*, 22 July 1936.
10 *Anglo-German Review*, August 1937.
11 *Hansard*, 4 Oct. 1938.
12 Jacobsen, op. cit., p. 334.
13 Gilbert and Gott., op. cit., p. 46. Note that the use of the word 'appeaser' is different from that used in this volume.
14 John Marlowe: *Late Victorian: The Life of Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson*, London, 1967, p. 304.
15 Wilson, *Walks and Talks*, London, 1934.
16 Ibid., p. 153.
17 Ibid., p. vii.
18 Ibid., p. 151. (See Chapter 1 for a discussion of this trend in the early thirties.) 19 Ibid., p. 16.
20 *Walks and Talks Abroad*, p. 60.
21 Ibid., p. 56, p. 93.
22 Ibid., p. 81.
23 Ibid., p. 83.
24 Ibid., p. 123.
25 Wilson, 'Germany in May', *English Review*, June 1934.
26 Speech at Königsberg, quoted in *Walks & Talks Abroad*, p. 126.
27 Speech at Hamburg, quoted in *Walks & Talks Abroad*, p. 139.
28 Ibid., p. 151.
29 Ibid., p. 96.
30 Ibid., p. 139.
31 *Manchester Guardian*, 24 May 1934.
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34 Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler*, Cambridge, 1975, p. 39.

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36 Rowland, op. cit., p. 712.
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38 F. R. Gannon, *The British Press and Germany, 1936–1939*, Oxford, 1971, pp. 25–6, p. 34.
39 Dawson diary, quoted in Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler,* pp. 128–9.
40 *News Chronicle*, 31 Aug. 1937, quoted in Gannon, op. cit., p. 33.
41 Cowling, op. cit., p. 46.
42 *Daily Mail*, 10 July 1933.
43 *Daily Mail*, 28 Nov. 1933.
44 *Daily Mail*, 28 Dec. 1934.
45 Quoted in Harold Nicolson, *King George V,* London, 1952, pp. 523–4.
46 Cowling, op. cit., p. 119.
47 Gannon, op. cit., p. 33.
48 Gannon, op. cit., p. 34.
49 Jacobsen, op. cit., p. 334.
50 Gannon, op. cit., p. 34.
51 Ward Price, *Extra-Special Correspondent*, London, 1957, p. 156.
52 Ibid., p. 213.
53 Ward Price, *I Know These Dictators*, London, 1937, pp. 16–23.
54 Ward Price, *Extra-Special Correspondent*, p. 213.
55 Ward Price, *I Know These Dictators*, p. 19.
56 Gannon, op. cit., p. 34.
57 Ward Price, *I Know These Dictators*, p. 117.
58 Ibid., p. 118.
59 Ibid., pp. 119–21.
60 Ibid., p. 161.
61 Ibid., p. 163.
62 Ibid., p. 152.
63 See *Daily Mail*, 16 June 1936.
64 Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler,* p. 119.
65 Lady Colefax, quoted in *Bruce Lockhart Diaries*, 20 Nov. 1933.
66 *'Chips'*, *The Diaries of Sir Henry Channon*, entry for 4 Aug. 1938.
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75 Ibid., entry for 11 Nov. 1935.
76 *'Chips'*, entry for Whitsuntide, 1935, p. 36.
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79 *Chips*, entry for 8 July 1936, p. 69 (referring to 1935).
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84 Ward Price, *I Know These Dictators*, p. 36.
85 Jessica Mitford, op. cit., p. 62.
86 Ibid., p. 62.
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88 Jacobsen, op. cit., p. 296.
89 Skidelsky, op. cit., p. 341.
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91 Bruce Lockhart, *Diary*, 17 July 1936.

92 Jacobsen, op. cit., p. 352.
93 Jessica Mitford, op. cit., p. 63.
94 Ibid., p. 63.
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104 Norman, op. cit., p. 361.
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106 Letter to *The Times*, 3 July 1933.
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112 Ibid., p. 27.
113 Ibid., p. 28.
114 Ibid., p. 113.
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116 Ibid., p. 34. See p. 72.
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120 *E.g. The Times*, 6 July 1933.
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122 Ibid., p. 235.
123 Ibid., p. 241.
124 Ibid., p. 242.
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126 Ibid., p. 246.
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128 Ibid., p. 248.
129 Ibid., p. 240.
130 Ibid., pp. 236–7.
131 Ibid., p. 245.
132 Speech, quoted in Tennant, *True Account*, London, 1957, pp. 154–9.
133 Tennant, *True Account*, p. 179.
134 Jacobsen, op. cit., p. 290.
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Part 2

1936–7 The Heyday

[7]

1936 – A Swing Towards Germany

THE YEAR 1936 has often been described as the ‘turning-point’ of the thirties. The remilitarisation of the Rhineland, in March, is now seen, in retrospect, to have been the first of Hitler’s moves towards expansion, and ‘the moment when Great Britain and France should have taken a firm line and insisted upon the withdrawal of the German troops as a preliminary to any discussion’.[1] Even though such action was not taken, observers looking at the situation after the event have presumed that this ought to have been the time when the British public became aware of the danger, and when those who had been tempted by pro-Nazi or pro-German feelings ought at least to have been checked in their stride.

In memoirs written later, a number of people, perhaps unconsciously, conform to this retrospective pattern by dating a change of heart from this time. E. W. D. Tennant, for example, whose close relationship with Ribbentrop we have already seen, writes:

> On the morning of 7th March German soldiers marched into the Rhineland and from then onwards my relations with Ribbentrop moved down to quite a different and more distant plane.[2]

Yet when we look at contemporary documents we see little sign of this change; and Tennant’s letters to *The Times* during the crisis showed a belief in the sincerity of Hitler’s peace proposals, and a justification for Germany’s action:

> For the sake of the British Empire, public opinion expects the Government of Britain not to fail to grasp this opportunity. To doubt the sincerity of these far-reaching proposals is to insult the honour of a great and friendly nation sorely tried by long years of undeserved ignominy.[3]

Tennant’s case is not untypical. Among those enthusiasts we have already been seeing, it is hard to trace a single case of someone who, in the course of 1936, renounced his enthusiasm. Indeed, it was this year that saw a startling number of new converts to friendship with Germany, and to admiration for the German régime. This movement became particularly marked as the year wore on, and is to be ascribed to a number of specific reasons, not all of them connected with the Rhineland crisis. It took place against the background of a significant shift in more moderate opinion.

This shift was in part based on foreign policy considerations, and the possibility of a German alliance. It was partly influenced by what appeared to be the growth of Communist influence in the West. At the same time, objections to German internal policies appeared in part to be being met; that ‘moderation’ of the excesses of the régime, which many had called for and some had even expected, appeared to be taking place. The German propaganda machine was geared, in 1936, to respectability, and it had its effect.

When, in the succeeding years, general public opinion in this country became less inclined towards Germany, a number of the new recruits to enthusiasm for things German, and for Nazi

policy, remained. During 1936 and 1937, the situation had changed: the reactions against Germany that we saw in 1933–5 were not as marked, and the enthusiasts for Germany were not so isolated. Issues had become more complicated, and British interests were now intertwined with what had been more general reactions.

As early as 1934, Lloyd George had told the House of Commons, 'In a very short time, perhaps in a year, perhaps in two, the Conservative elements in this country will be looking to Germany as the bulwark against Communism in Europe.'[4] This prophecy came true in 1936; and it was in this year, for the first time, that pro-Nazism became heavily identified with the British Right.

Background to the Rhineland Coup

There are a number of significant factors to be remembered about British public opinion in the first months of 1936. The first is that Germany was by no means at the centre of its thoughts. Of the European powers, Italy held the centre of the stage, and public reactions to the Abyssinian war were strong. The uproar over the Hoare–Laval pact had just taken place. When Germany was considered, it was very much in the context of a need for understanding.

The general public reaction to Germany's internal policies (particularly those in respect of the Jews) had been one of distaste. But, as so often, this distaste was felt by many to be unimportant when placed alongside national interest and foreign policy. Why, it was asked, did not the people who condemned Germany also condemn Soviet Russia? Lord Winterton,[5] replying in *The Times* to a letter by Wickham Steed, is typical of the attitude of many:

> I am sorely tempted to ask him why, when he rightly condemns the internal and external policy of Germany, he does not equally reprobate the terrible cruelties practised in Soviet Russia and the activities of the Comintern … I should have thought that, quite apart from the interests of the British Empire, those of humanity demand, above everything else, that some basis of appeasement and friendship should be sought between the most powerful and heavily armed Western European nations.[6]

Another familiar note is contained in a controversy which took place in February, when methods of teaching the Germans to be more tolerant to Jews were discussed in *The Times*, in relation to the invitations sent by Heidelberg University to British universities, to attend the 550th anniversary of its foundation. The Bishop of Durham suggested that no representatives should be sent; in the resultant controversy in *The Times* many supported him, but many others, while deploring Germany's intolerance and persecution of the Jews, declared that this kind of public boycott did no good at all, and would only drive Germany more deeply into her present attitudes. The matter attracted, of course, the attention of a number of the apologists for the Nazi régime, who pointed out that there was as much to criticise in Britain – and particularly in Durham – as in Germany, and that there was also much to praise in the latter country.[7] But the main lines of the discussion were more concerned with the policy to be pursued to bring Germany to change her ways, and for most of those who took part Germany's shortcomings in this area were not in doubt.

In the Press, the only major daily to be actively enthusiastic about the Nazi régime remained the *Daily Mail*, whose first leader of 30 January, on the occasion of the third anniversary of Hitler's accession, paid tribute to Hitler's success in placing Germany once more in the forefront of the nations, and to his cancellation of the Communist menace.[8] But the Press as a whole, whatever its opinions about the Nazi internal régime, maintained the same distinction between foreign policy and views on Germany's internal policies that we have seen in certain sections of

the public.

That Germany would at some stage attempt to alter the status of the Rhineland was generally accepted; indeed, the possibility was always present that she might seek to do so unilaterally. There was a great deal of sympathy for Germany's case in this specific instance, and any concern the newspapers showed was, as Gannon puts it, 'to avoid *a fait accompli* in the Rhineland'[9] rather than to oppose Germany's aims.

The demilitarisation of the Rhineland was widely felt, in this country, to be one of the most unjust of the Treaty's clauses. The reasons for the clause – France's fears of German military power, and the need to avoid a threatening military presence on the Rhine – were either ignored or forgotten, and the prohibition to move German troops to Cologne or Mainz was seen as 'in itself as irritating as a prohibition to move English troops to Colchester or Chatham would be to us'. It was 'the last odious survival of certain provisions of the Treaty of Versailles'.[10] According to Sir Samuel Hoare, 'three people out of four' were asking themselves, in March, 'what justification could there be for a European war to uphold an out-of-date clause of the Versailles Treaty, and why should not the Germans have full sovereign rights in some of the most German territories of the Reich?'[11]

While all these attitudes to Germany explain the nation's acquiescence in the German action of 7 March, they do not help us in any way to explain the explosion of pro-German feeling which took place in the month or so after that event. To examine the reasons for this more closely, we will have to look at the position of France at this time, and attempt to assess Hitler's motives for action.

France had, since the Great War, been Britain's most natural ally. There had been strains in the relationship, of course. It was often hard for the British to understand French concerns, even at the time of the Treaty of Versailles. The French occupation of the Rhineland had estranged British opinion. But, on the whole, the British public, and the British Government, saw their immediate neighbours as their closest collaborators, even though France was difficult and obstructive about matters like disarmament. The events of 1936 were to shake this relationship more strongly than at any time since the war.

In some sections of the community there had been considerable anti-French feeling before the Rhineland crisis. The French had, in some British eyes, failed to give proper support to the sanctions policy against Italy. As Emile Mireaux, editor of *Le Temps*, was to write in July 1936, after the end of the Abyssinian campaign:

> English opinion … is unshakably convinced that, if Italy has been able to embark so resolutely upon her Abyssinian adventure and to bring it to a successful conclusion, it has only been possible on account of the secret connivance of France, or at least of the latter's reluctance to lend her support in the long run to a more vigorous means of coercing Italy.[12]

The Hoare–Laval Pact, and the row to which it led in December 1935, had exacerbated these views. It is true to say, however, that alienation from France was, in this instance, experienced by people who would be unlikely to be influenced by it into any closer relationship with Germany.

It was the Franco-Soviet Pact which, while incidentally justifying Hitler's actions as a reply to threatened 'encirclement', also drew into the anti-French fold certain sections of Conservative opinion. This pact, drawn up in May 1935, was eventually ratified on 27 February 1936. In real terms, it may not have been very important. A. J. P. Taylor suggests that Laval 'allowed Barthou's policy to drift' as far as the pact, but that 'the pact was empty: never reinforced as the old alliance had been by military conversations, never taken seriously by any French government, maybe not by the Soviet government either'.[13] Subsequent events seem to show Taylor to have been right.

Yet it all depends what you mean by ‘in real terms’. The Franco-Soviet Pact was a powerful myth which strongly influenced sections of public opinion in this country.

Hitler: a policy of division?

Anthony Eden believed, at the time of the Rhineland crisis, that Hitler’s main aim had been to drive a wedge between the British and the French. This had, in Eden’s eyes, been avoided by the diplomatic ingenuity that was exercised in the course of March. Avoided on the diplomatic level, certainly. But at the level of public opinion? Here, if such was Hitler’s aim, he achieved success.

It is obvious that there was very little reason for Hitler to march in as a unilateral act. As Baron von Schweppenburg, Military Attaché at the German Embassy in London at the time, wrote in his memoirs:

> We in London found it difficult to understand the reasons for this unexpected step … Among the many hard words I had to listen to in the War Office forty-eight hours after the Occupation of the Rhineland were these: ‘You could have achieved all that by negotiation, and the stage had very nearly been reached when it would have been possible.’[14]

Baron von Schweppenburg hazards the guess that it was probably the Franco-Soviet Pact which finally made Hitler break his promise not to resort to violence without previously attempting to negotiate. This was, indeed, the reason given by Hitler for his action. But it does not ring true. The supposition is presumably that the ratification of the pact on 27 February made Hitler suddenly decide to march into the Rhineland eight days later. But the pact had been agreed since May 1935, and the ratification was a mere formality (Laval allowed debate on it, though there was no need for him to do so). All writings before 27 February had treated the pact as a reality. The date for Hitler’s action, therefore, seems to have been chosen on the basis of the symbolic nature of the date of ratification; the Franco-Soviet Pact was specifically chosen as a justification.

The form which Hitler’s action took, and the other events surrounding it, point to another basic preoccupation. This was the desire to set England and France against each other.

English and French reactions to the events of March were predictable. Both nations had been severely marked by the First World War, and had a strong desire never to be involved in such a matter again. By their geographical positions, however, each nation was bound to react differently to European events. For Britain, the important thing was not to get too closely involved in Europe. For France, European involvement was inevitable, and, with her extensive frontiers, alarming. Ever since 1918 she had been concerned to keep Germany in such a position that the danger of aggression could be kept in check. French preparations, such as they were (based upon an outmoded concept of defensive warfare) were aimed towards the German frontier. Talk as one might about Franco-German understanding, there was always a fear of the traditional enemy at the back of most Frenchmen’s minds. The Versailles Treaty, which now seemed to most Englishmen excessively harsh, contained, for the French, a series of necessary safeguards which should not be tampered with.

Within Europe, too, France had need of allies. Friendship or alliance with Great Britain was all very well, but British aid on land was likely to be tardy and inadequate. With the growing danger of a renascent Germany, aggressive in tone and in potentiality, France needed some Continental partner. In the thirties, Italy appeared a much more formidable nation than she eventually turned out to be. Until the clinching of the Rome–Berlin Axis Pact in October 1936 (and indeed after it) the possibility of playing off one dictator against another was always present, or seemed to be.

France's actions in relation to the Abyssinian War are thereby explained. As Winston Churchill succinctly put it, France feared Germany, and needed Italy.[15] She fell between two stools by trying to please Britain and at the same time not estrange Italy. Her actions, as Lord Hugh Cecil put it, had 'done enough to offend Italy, but not enough to restrain her'.[16]

Now, with the Rhineland, the French were bound to react in a belligerent manner. The demilitarisation of the Rhineland had not been a purely arbitrary piece of vindictive nastiness; it had had a military reason behind it. At the time of Versailles, most of the French proposals in relation to Germany had been attempts to create a defensive barrier for the next conflict; it was as if they regarded another war as inevitable. Extreme views in France had talked about a 'Rhine frontier' for France, so that the Rhine could be the natural barrier between the two countries; shortly after the war members of the French Army had actively encouraged the Rhineland separatist movement, in the hope that a new buffer state could be created. The decision of the Treaty of Versailles to demilitarise the Rhineland was widely regarded in France as a *pis aller*, which would nevertheless slow up any German aggression, and allow the French to march into Belgium to take up defensive positions along the rivers and canals before the Germans could reach them. In the French mythology, a demilitarised Rhineland was essential to French safety; and German aggressive tactics in that particular area were bound to bring a far stronger reaction than similar tactics in the East would have.

Added to this, in more general terms, the French believed in a harder line against Germany than the British did. For them, Germany was an active danger; give her an inch and she would take a mile. The Germans must be tied down to positive actions and safeguards; words were not enough.

As we have seen, the British attitude was very different. We had the luxury of being able to risk trusting in words, and we did not seem to need to seek for safeguards. And the Rhineland question, for us, could be viewed as an issue of the nature of national sovereignty; in this light, it was an obvious injustice to Germany.

So, in marching into the Rhineland, Hitler must have known that, while the British would almost certainly accept the *fait accompli,* the French would react fairly strongly to it. If, in the process, the French could be made to seem unreasonable, and a danger to peace, the British could be expected to view them with, at the least, irritation. Play up the Franco-Soviet Pact, and sections of the British public would see themselves in imminent danger of being ensnared in European commitments on behalf of Bolshevik Russia.

Whether Hitler consciously intended this effect or not, the sequence of events led to this result. On 21 February Hitler gave an interview to the Frenchman Bertrand de Jouvenel, of *Paris-Midi;* Jouvenel's article was eventually reprinted in the *Daily Mirror* of 29 February. In it, Hitler was addressing a French journalist about the duty of France to let bygones be bygones, and to become friends with Germany. He also stressed the Bolshevik danger. Gannon tells us that in Great Britain 'reaction to this interview varied from critical disappointment to great enthusiasm';[17] among those newspapers which took a positive view was the *News Chronicle,* and its statement is particularly significant; it advised the French people, 'who stand most to lose and least to gain by war',[18] not to let this offer of friendship pass.

So, two weeks before the Rhineland coup, Hitler was sowing dissent between France and Britain, by offering France the hand of friendship in such a way that she was bound to seem to behave churlishly. For, as some of the more perspicacious British papers immediately noticed, there was nothing concrete in the proposals. And, while other sections of the British looked to France for a sign of grasping the outstretched hand, the French, as might have been predicted, looked for something more solid in the way of guarantees. Among the things which the French press asked for as a sign of good intentions was that Germany should return to the League.

Whether the French requirements were reasonable or not, the impression given was one of grudging non-cooperation. In the course of the week between Hitler's interview and the march into the Rhineland, a number of British reactions were expressed to the French attitudes. Lord Dickinson,[19] for example, thought that it was a pity that, when Germany was putting forward a plea for cooperation, the French press should put forward conditions which could only wreck it. Why did they insist on Germany rejoining the League? This would be extremely difficult for Germany, in present circumstances.[20]

On the morning of 7 March, as the troops were marching into the Rhineland, Hitler was addressing the diplomatic representatives of Great Britain, France, Italy and Belgium. On the negative side, he criticised the Franco-Soviet Pact, which justified the reoccupation of the Rhineland. On the positive side, he put forward a peace plan which, in place of the Locarno Convention, would create individual pacts of non-aggression with Germany's western neighbours, which could last either twenty-five or fifty years, and which could be guaranteed by Great Britain and Italy. As regards armaments, while Germany would continue to achieve parity because of the dangers surrounding her, he was willing to enter into an air pact with Great Britain as a first step to restrictions all round. He was also prepared to conclude a comprehensive non-aggression pact with the states on Germany's eastern borders. Finally, he offered to re-enter the League of Nations.

The large-scale nature of these peace proposals (which even included what had seemed a stumbling-block, the League of Nations) was bound to impress a large section of the British public; but the French reaction, publicly at least, had to concern itself above all with the reality of the Rhineland. They had to take a firm line.

So Hitler had managed to drive a wedge between the British and the French. On a diplomatic and political level, Eden, by a series of intricate manoeuvres, managed to avoid a rift. On the level of public opinion, however, strong feelings were expressed, on both sides, about France's belligerence and unreasonableness, and about Britain's pusillanimity.

Some reactions to the Rhineland coup

'The people of this country absolutely refuse to have a war,' wrote Harold Nicolson on 16 March. 'We should be faced by a general strike if we even suggested such a thing.'[21] However, as events were later to show, the British people could change their minds on the matter, if the case for war was good enough.

The fact was, that in the Rhineland crisis they saw no cause for war whatsoever. Germany had merely 'marched into her own backyard'. And of far more importance was the evidence she was giving of a positive attitude towards ending the present tensions in Europe.

'British View of the Crisis: Condemn the Past: Rebuild for the Future'

was the headline in *The Times* of 10 March. The British press was on the whole enthusiastic about Hitler's peace proposals. This was 'a turning-point in world history'.[22] Discussion must be started 'on Hitler's positive proposals',[23] and this must be 'in a spirit of sympathy and goodwill'.[24] In the chorus of approval, the normally enthusiastic *Daily Mail* no longer stuck out like a sore thumb. Claude Cockburn, in *The Week*, remarked with disgust on 'the sudden alignment of the *News Chronicle* and the *Daily Herald* with the policy of the Rothermere Press'. Cockburn deplored what he described as a 'lightning switch-around' of the policy of these papers.[25]

There were, of course, voices of caution in certain quarters,[26] but the main reaction was to

condone the coup (even while publicly condemning it), and to turn one's attention to a positive outcome. Harold Nicolson ascribed this attitude, as seen in the House of Commons, to fear; 'General mood of the House is one of fear. Anything to keep out of war.'[27] He saw it as an attitude not confined to the Commons, but felt by the country as a whole: 'The country will not stand for anything that makes for war.'[28] Yet, when we look at contemporary attitudes, the strongest avowed motives were not abhorrence of war, but sympathy for Germany and irritation with France, which were to become polarised as pro-German and anti-French feeling.

'On all sides one hears sympathy for Germany',[29] wrote Harold Nicolson from the House of Commons. At the other end of the social scale, George Orwell noted that, in the course of two 'discussion groups' in Headingley on 9 and 10 March, mainly consisting of unemployed men, 'with two exceptions all pro-German'.[30] That this feeling was not based on fear is shown by his comment: 'Most people saying (some of them with ill-dissembled hope) that war is certain.'[31]

France's reaction to the coup followed the pattern that might have been foreseen. She stuck to the legalities, and expected Britain to follow suit. Harold Nicolson stated the dilemma in a letter to his wife:

> The French are not letting us off one jot or tittle of the bond. 'The Covenant of the League has been violated. Locarno has been violated. We merely ask you to fulfil your obligations under those two treaties.' We are thus faced either with repudiation of our pledged word or the risk of war …[32]

Flandin's attitude was that Germany's troops must be withdrawn from the Rhineland before negotiations for a settlement were begun. Much of Flandin's intransigence was, as he admitted to the British, 'designed for public consumption in France';[33] in practice Eden was able to modify the position considerably. But naturally, what was seen by the French public was also seen by the British public. Throughout the period of the crisis, France was seen by the British as being unshakeably belligerent; this was so obvious that, in one case, a letter to *The Times* needed no explanation when it said:

> Sir – Newsbill of *Paris-Midi* today:
> La Réponse Allemande.
> Le Gouvernement Français
> *prépare sa riposte.*
> The italics are mine.[34]

Even those who were well disposed towards France felt the unreasonableness of her attitudes. A typical example was Sir Ralph Glyn, Unionist MP for the Abingdon Division of North Berks., who wrote in an open letter to his constituents that the Government's policy was 'to carry out loyally our legitimate obligations and to restrain the French from violent action, but certainly not to betray France'.[35]

France's apparent belligerence led many people to realise that Britain might be carried into war on her coat-tails. At the same time, this made the Franco-Soviet Pact seem dangerous, not merely to Germany, but also to this country. And to the large section of the community which had a fear and hatred of Bolshevism, this raised the spectre of Britain going to war on behalf of Russia.

'Behind the stage, as in 1914, stands Russia; as to whom there is evidence of a Soviet Government plan – still up its sleeve – for forcing Germany into a "holy war" by trailing Soviet coat-tails (in the shape of aeroplanes nominally bound for France) along or over the German border; thus making of the inevitable German counteraction an "act of aggression" which would

involve Czechoslovakia and France in support of Russia. Each of these three sets of actors [France, Czechoslovakia and Russia] seeks to force Great Britain to take a stand … driving us to support war.' So wrote 'ah Englishman resident in a European capital' to Sir Arnold Wilson in a letter he received on 23 March.[36] Such views were common.

The Franco-Soviet Pact was 'almost a betrayal of Western Civilization'[37] to many Conservatives, Sir Austen Chamberlain noted. Sir Ernest Bennett, National Labour MP for Central Cardiff, echoed these views in a letter to *The Times* in which various typical attitudes to Germany's internal policy were also expressed:

> I frankly deplore Germany's harsh treatment of her Jewish subjects and certain religious leaders, and share your correspondents' hopes that this policy may be modified. But really, if Germany's re-entry into the League and her reasonable demands for equality status are to be questioned because of her treatment of the Jews and the clergy, what about our attitude towards Russia? If we find ourselves once more virtually pledged – against the wishes, I am certain, of the vast majority of the people – to a military alliance with the French, we *ipso facto*, in case of a war, become the military allies of Russia, whose ceaseless endeavours to ridicule and destroy the Faith of Christ and subsidize and promote Communist propaganda in our midst appear infinitely more odious to thoughtful men and women in this country than any features of Germany's domestic policy.[38]

The British attachment to France was thus seen by many to have been a harmful entanglement and, as one observer noted, 'Public opinion in England – as I read it – believes that our foreign policy since the War has been too much under French influence.'[39] There was an outburst of irritation against France in the British press in March. The atmosphere was such that even a moderate man like Robert Bruce Lockhart could find the attitudes of those who remained pro-French 'very dangerous'. He described, in his diary for 2 March, a party at which were present '… Lewis Namier, who is violently anti-German … and Colin Coote of *The Times* … very pro-French. Attitude of these people very dangerous – "Public are fools and know nothing. We know Germany, and they cannot be trusted".'[40]

It is interesting to note that, for some people, this swing of public opinion had been not only foreseen, but welcomed. On the very day of Hitler's march into the Rhineland Sir John Reith, the Director-General of the BBC, had written in his diary: 'English foreign policy can really now break off from French influence and dominate.'[41]

The public desire to avoid further French commitments was such that even those who valued France's friendship had to give assurances that no new obligations were involved. In the House of Commons debate on 26 March Eden stressed that arrangements between France and Soviet Russia did not involve any new commitments for Britain. Members hastened to assure their constituents of this. Sir Ralph Glyn, for example, wrote in the *Reading Mercury* on the 28th:

> Our obligations to France remain that if she is the victim of an unprovoked attack, we will go to her aid. We have accepted no new obligations, nor will we accept any.[42]

Though the Government might protest, the public were not necessarily convinced, and anti-French feeling continued. As Lord Mount Temple put it:

> There still persists a widespread apprehension that as a result of the Franco-Soviet Pact France might become engaged in a war on the side of Russia and that Britain might become involved in it. To find themselves drawn into a war in defence of Bolshevism would be deeply repugnant

to the mass of the British people. They would resent seeing the Union Jack flying beside the Red Flag, and would rightly refuse to rise in honour of the 'Internationale'.[43]

Five young men of widely differing political opinions wrote a letter to *The Times* on 27 March which may be taken as an expression of moderate opinion on the European situation. They were John Boyd-Carpenter, A. W. J. Greenwood, P. G. Heath-coat-Amery, A. J. Irvine and J. C. Smuts. It is significant that their letter, alongside the suggestion 'that the Powers should immediately open negotiations upon the terms which Herr Hitler offers', should have put forward the plea 'that existing undertakings should be honoured, but that our Government should rigorously refrain from involving this country in fresh commitments to France *for which there would be no popular support*'.[44]

Pro-German responses

Anti-French feeling not only produced sympathy for Germany. It also evoked, in certain quarters, statements of admiration for Hitler and the Nazi régime. The *Saturday Review,* which until this time had not had much to say about Germany (and had, when it did deal with German affairs, been on the whole opposed to Nazism),[45] had been enough impressed by Hitler's interview with Jouvenel to print a large portrait of Hitler on its cover on 7 March, with the words: 'Heil Hitler! No happier event could happen than a pact between Germany, France, Italy, England and Japan. This would ensure the Peace of the World. (Signed) Lucy Houston.'[46] The Rhineland coup caused it to go far further.

On 14 March a major article appeared entitled 'What a man!', in which Hitler was described as having 'rendered a service to war-racked Europe and to the rest of the world'. To the German nation he stood forth 'as their deliverer from oppression and despair, tottering a few years ago into a state of Bolshevism. He has brought them through the fire, beaten them on the anvil of a pure nationalism, enthused them with his vigour and spirit until they stand today, proud in their sacrifices, rejoicing in their new formed strength, a nation in arms, ready to serve whatever their Fatherland requires'. Hitler was contrasted with the more effete régimes of the West, and particularly with Baldwin, who had 'leaned far too heavily towards Bolshevism', and had 'rendered it impossible for the British Nation to engage in warfare, as the debate on rearmament has shown'.[47] Another article in the same number, by Meriel Buchanan,[48] was entitled 'Hitler – The Man of Destiny'.

These attitudes, which reflect Lady Houston's aggressive anti-Bolshevism, and at the same time her urgent pleas for British rearmament, continued in the *Saturday Review* throughout the rest of the month, particularly in Meriel Buchanan's articles 'France should make friends with Germany' (21 March), and 'France was Unwise in Preferring a Pact with Russia to Hitler's Offer of Friendship' (28 March), in the first of which it was made clear that, with Mussolini and Hitler dominating Europe, 'Bolshevism cannot carry out its plans for the disintegration of civilisation'. Other articles included 'Hitler at Home' (21 March), which stressed his love of children and animals, and 'Hitler and the British Press' (28 March), which described Hitler's passionate desire for peace in his time.

Another enthusiastic figure was Lord Londonderry. He had just returned from his visit to Germany, in January and February, on which he had met Goering and Ribbentrop on several occasions, and also had an interview with Hitler on 5 February.[49] On 12 March, in a letter to *The Times*, he specifically set out to justify Germany's internal policies against her critics, as well as justifying the Rhineland coup. 'The Treaty of Versailles', he said, was 'a document of singular

ineptitude.' The Rhineland coup was 'a direct and understandable result of the Franco-Soviet Treaty, which is a definite move, regardless of Locarno, in the encirclement of Germany'. People might dislike German internal policies, but 'the difficulties surrounding Herr Hitler's position are frequently disregarded, and many in their outspoken judgements and criticisms compare the methods and habits of Great Britain and its dominions, as if they could have any counterpart in Germany today, a country which has known defeat, which has passed through a period of chaotic impotence, and which has had to resort to desperate measures to avert a revolution within the last three and a half years'.[50]

Arnold Toynbee, on a lecture tour to Germany in February, had had a long interview with Hitler on 28 February,[51] and returned 'convinced of his sincerity in desiring peace in Europe and close friendship with England, regarding France as secondary'.[52] At a house-party at Lothian's house Blickling, on the fateful weekend of the Rhineland coup, he expressed these views to Tom Jones, who persuaded him to put them down on paper for the benefit of Baldwin and Eden.

Many already-established German enthusiasts took, of course, the opportunity given by the coup, and publicly expressed their views once more. William Harbutt Dawson, in *The Nineteenth Century and After*, welcomed the swing towards Germany that had occurred during March: 'There must be in most of us an uplifting feeling of gratitude that the nation in general has judged the situation so justly and so generously, helped, no doubt, by a Press which in this conjuncture has proved worthy of its best traditions.'[53] Lord Mount Temple, Lord Redesdale, and Colonel T. C. R. Moore wrote to *The Times*, as did Lady Apsley,[54] who showed great keenness for the German Labour Camps.

Mosley, too, reacted as might have been expected. His article in *Action* for 12 March was entitled 'Peace with Germany – The Way Out for Europe', and in a meeting on 15 March Orwell describes him as saying, 'We fought Germany before in a British quarrel, we are not going to fight them now in a Jewish one', and being greeted with loud applause.[55] The great BUF peace campaign had started.

One must beware of exaggerating the effect of the Rhineland coup. Of those who expressed strong admiration for Germany in the succeeding weeks, most were people who had already been inclined that way. Isolated cases like the *Saturday Review* were unusual. What was remarkable was the extensive shift in moderate public opinion from France to Germany,[56] and the sympathy expended on the latter. This was the basis on which the move to pro-Germanism later in the year was to be based, helped along by further developments in the European situation and by Germany's own considerable propaganda efforts.

No observers could fail to see this basic shift, though there were different interpretations of it. By the end of the month, Tom Jones thought 'the country is pro-English, rather fed up with France than actively pro-German, but more pro-German than the Cabinet'.[57] In Parliament, members seem to have been swung by whoever talked to them: 'In two party meetings of back-benchers last week, the first, addressed by Austen and Winston, was on the whole pro-French; but two or three days later opinion had swung round to a majority of about five to four for Germany. Part of the opposition to France is influenced by the fear of our being drawn in on the side of Russia.'[58] At another stage, 'the Whips estimated that 70% in a large attendance of the Government's supporters were anti-French'.[59]

Another thing worth noting is that the pro-German reaction, though largely felt in Conservative circles, as far as public life was concerned, was not exclusively so. Liberal and Labour peers declared themselves in the same way; and, in the people at large, the shade of political opinion did not seem to matter; 'public opinion' was cited by a number of politicians as the reason for modifying Government policies. Orwell's 'discussion groups' were unlikely to have been

predominantly Conservative. As Sir Arnold Wilson put it, 'The unmistakable determination of the man in the street to dissociate himself from demonstrations against Germany has startled many observers.' This was 'the attitude of mind of some scores of men in all walks of life with whom I have talked'.[60]

Was this a permanent change in public opinion, or a flash in the pan? Pro-French politicians like Harold Nicolson hoped that the latter was the case. Nicolson told Dieckhoff, Chief of the Political Department of the German Foreign Office, that 'they must not believe all they were told regarding the pro-German feeling in this country, and that opinion would swing against them if they were unreasonable. He grinned …'[61] Nicolson also, in the Foreign Affairs debate of 26 March, told the House of Commons that 'the present pro-Germanism is a wave and not a tide; that it is only a fluctuation'.[62] One senses an element of wishful thinking; at any rate, events were to prove him wrong.

The Abyssinian Interlude, and the French Popular Front

The next two months saw Germany virtually banished from the headlines, as the Abyssinian War drew relentlessly to a close. Negotiations between Britain, France and Germany had continued; Ribbentrop had arrived in London with a new peace plan on 1 April. The British Government sent a list of questions to the German Government to which the German Government neglected to reply. The matter was occasionally mentioned in the press, in passing. But the crisis was over, and there seemed to be more important things to consider.

The Abyssinian War roused many emotions. Despite the fact that it had been at the centre of attention for a year, interest was heightened for two reasons: (a) the complete victory of Mussolini (military opinion had forecast that it would take at least two winter campaigns);[63] (b) The strong evidence of Italian 'beastliness', particularly in the matter of the use of mustard-gas.

Addis Ababa was occupied on 5 May, and the Duce made a speech announcing that 'Abyssinia is Italian'. Opinions, in Britain, were violent, on one side and on the other. The *Saturday Review*, forgetting Germany, had returned to its true love with a full-page picture of Mussolini, coupled with an article called 'Bravo, Mussolini!', on 25 April.[64] On the news of the fall of Addis Ababa, Lady Houston sent a telegram to Mussolini which ran as follows: 'TEN THOUSAND TIMES BRAVO BRAVISSIMO: OH! SPLENDID MAN!! I REJOICE TO KNOW THAT YOUR EXCELLENCY HAS TRIUMPHED OVER YOUR ENEMIES IN ABYSSINIA AND YOUR ENEMIES IN ENGLAND. AND ALL YOUR ENGLISH FRIENDS CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR GREAT VICTORY. LONG LIVE ITALY! LUCY HOUSTON.'[65]

While not going to Lady Houston's extremes, a number of other people took up Italy's case. But it must be admitted that, if there had been a majority who were pro-German in March, there appeared to be a majority who were anti-Italian in April and May. Much of it was caused by what was seen as 'the beastly conduct of Italy in Abyssinia'.[66] Italy's use of 'unlimited' warfare had shown how terrible modern war was.

There were several corollaries to this attitude. If war was now so horrible, some thought, peace must be preserved at any price. For others, Italy had now become so clearly the villain of Europe that Germany's internal policies faded into insignificance. As Germany, at any rate, was consciously playing down her internal policies in the year 1936, the contrast appeared even greater.

As for France, she was seen by Lord Hugh Cecil and others to have completely let down the side.[67] 'Public opinion' was now 'seriously alienated' from France.[68] In a sense, France could not

win; she had lost the support of most sections of British opinion.

Meanwhile, events had happened in France which were further to affect British views. The General Election (first round: 26 April: second round: 3 May) had brought to power the Popular Front, an alliance of Radicals, Socialists and Communists. This was an unknown quantity, for two reasons: the installation of Communists in power just across the Channel (though it was often conveniently forgotten that the Communists had declined to participate in Léon Blum's government; it was merely a government supported by the Communists); and the new weakness of France, illustrated by a flight from the franc and the wave of strikes and sit-ins which threatened to paralyse the life of the nation.

France's internal affairs certainly worried British opinion. She seemed to be polarised between extreme Right and extreme Left.

Where the Germans could affect influential British people against France, they did. Ribbentrop, on his visit to London early in April, 'made contact with all our available friends'. The Carlton Hotel was 'like a dovecote'. Many people came to see him without even having been asked, 'accompanied by many a well-known man whom I had not met before'. He spent hours explaining the German case. 'The fact that no further complications developed was, I think, largely due to these men, who were prominent leaders in politics and business and who powerfully influenced public opinion. In those critical hours Germany and I, personally, discovered many a good friend in England.'[69]

It was often noted, by those who met him, that Ribbentrop tended to speak very much on the same note to all those whom he saw at specific stages of Germany's policy. (The concentration on Germany's need for colonies, later in the year, was a case in point.) So we may take his words to Tom Jones, at a private lunch at the Carlton Hotel on 8 April, as typical of the German approach in that month:

> Communism is the enemy which Germany cannot resist alone and successfully without the help of Great Britain. France is succumbing to the bribery of Moscow; so is Spain. The Paris press and the French Deputies, a hundred of them, are in the pay of the Bolsheviks, so he assured me.[70]

Such statements were particularly likely to be effective with the Conservative anti-Bolshevist Right (though even Tom Jones was prepared to believe in 'the corruption of the Paris press and of the Deputies',[71] and was not far wrong in doing so).

The belief, on the British Right, in the 'Communist threat' from France was to bear its full fruit when the Spanish Civil War came, to confirm the picture of Communist machinations in Western Europe. For the moment, however, the most important effect of the Popular Front, and the events surrounding it, was to stress France's weaknesses. The events of Abyssinia had seemed to underline these and to assert Italy's strength. For many observers, there were now two great European powers, Germany and Italy, and Britain had to choose between them (for the Austrian question seemed still to divide them, and the Axis pact was not yet in existence).

Robert Bruce Lockhart and Maurice Peterson[72] summed up the views of many when they 'agreed that, whether she likes dictatorships or not, England cannot afford to be anti-German and anti-Italian at the same time. She must choose – or be friends with both!' Peterson opted for Germany: 'Maurice, who is now worried about the Mediterranean–Near East situation, would prefer Germany as a friend.'[73]

Other observers saw the choice as being between Germany and Russia, and believed that the decision should be taken swiftly, 'for if we do not do so, Germany and Italy will converge'.[74] A German alliance was viewed favourably even in the highest political circles: 'Our PM is not

indisposed to attempt this as a final effort before he resigns after the Coronation next year.'[75]

German propaganda; Ribbentrop

Many historians have referred to the 'Olympic pause', by which the Nazis played down their political activity, particularly in relation to the Jews, in the months leading up to the Olympic Games in Berlin in August. That the propaganda value of the Olympic Games was important to them is clear from the care with which they used that event; but the 'pause' was more than Olympic; as far as internal policies were concerned, it spanned the whole year.

Indeed, the murder of the Swiss Nazi leader, Gustloff, in early February, might well have been expected to set off a pogrom within Germany (as the murder of vom Rath was to do in 1938). Was the lack of vengeful activity due merely to the Olympic Games? Or was it part of a desire to produce the 'acceptable' face of Germany at the time of the Rhineland exercise, in order to gain sympathy for Germany's cause?

The fact is that the whole of the year 1936 saw a definite attempt, on the part of Germany, to become 'respectable' in the eyes of other nations. Those who believed in the 'Olympic pause' theory naturally expected, after the Games were over, that the Nuremberg Rally would produce the theme of anti-Semitism (as in 1935), and that the Jews would be made to suffer even more. But Nuremberg, in September 1936, was innocuous on the internal front, and the main themes were anti-Bolshevism and Germany's need for colonies. It was the '1936' pause, and the Olympic Games were merely part of a vast propaganda exercise aimed at the Western World.

Much of this exercise was aimed, particularly, at Great Britain. The theme of anti-Bolshevism, the theme of France's decadence, the theme of Germany's just demands, and the hard deal she had received at Versailles and Locarno – all these things were accompanied by a comprehensive approach to the British, spearheaded by Ribbentrop. England and Germany were natural allies, and should be friends.

Ribbentrop's efforts on his visit to London for the League Council in early April have already been described. Just before leaving London he saw Sir Robert Vansittart,[76] whom he rightly considered a key man if Anglo-German relations were to be improved. Vansittart was, as most of his contemporaries realised, strongly in favour of the French connexion, and highly suspicious of Germany. Ribbentrop described him as 'sceptical of Germany, difficult to understand, and hard to win over'.[77]

It was at this stage that Ribbentrop returned to the project of arranging a private interview between the British Prime Minister, Baldwin, and Hitler. Clearly the Foreign Office was unsympathetic to German aims, and there was need for a 'summit' meeting, which could cut across these awkward views on the part of intermediaries. How was it to be arranged? The earlier attempt, through Tennant and Davidson, had been unsuccessful. Baldwin had declined the invitation.[78] Now Baldwin was Prime Minister, and the meeting was of great importance.

On this occasion a new contact was used, someone whom he knew better than he had known Davidson, and who, with a Welshman's natural instinct to please, had probably given a very favourable impression at the lunch they had had together in early April. This was Tom Jones; an unlikely figure, as he held no official post. He had been Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet, and Secretary to the Economic Advisory Council, but since his retirement in 1930 he had devoted himself to the Pilgrim Trust, of which he was Secretary. But Tom Jones had retained his friendship with the great, and particularly with Stanley Baldwin. At his lunch with Ribbentrop 'I had made it quite plain to him that he must take the risk of my repeating anything he told me to the Prime Minister should any opportunity occur.'[79] Jones's self-importance may have impressed

Ribbentrop; his susceptibility to flattery seemed to make him a perfect contact.

In early May Count Durckheim wrote to Jones, saying that he had come over from Berlin expressly to deliver personally a message from Ribbentrop. Jones invited him to lunch at his club, the Athenaeum. Ribbentrop's message was an invitation to spend a weekend with him on a private visit to his home. Jones protested that he was 'a person of no importance', though 'it was true that I enjoyed the friendship of the Prime Minister and saw him occasionally'. Nevertheless, he made a swift decision to accept the invitation the next weekend.[80]

On Friday, 15 May, he flew to Berlin, and on the morning of the 16th he and Ribbentrop had an extended interview. 'Ribbentrop began … by saying he had sent for me in order to talk without reserve and in a way he could not with Phipps at the Embassy.' This piece of flattery was followed by another: 'He said he knew what my position was in London and if I would agree to go to and fro between him and Mr Baldwin in confidence, my visit might be of the greatest importance – as important as Joseph Chamberlain's.'

Ribbentrop then announced his desire that Hitler and Baldwin should meet man to man. Baldwin should hear Hitler's view 'without any intermediary'. Hitler's greatest desire was that English opinion should move towards Germany, as it seemed to be doing. Ribbentrop then made 'some disparaging remarks about professional diplomats, both German and English'.[81]

The next day Jones met Hitler himself. He appears, at first, to have left Hitler little opportunity to speak: '… I pointed out that I was a private and unofficial person, but that as a former Civil Servant I had come much into contact with Mr Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Mr Ramsay MacDonald, and Mr Baldwin … I had been at the Cannes Conference when we tried to scale down German reparations … I had arranged the famous golf match which brought Briand down. I had been with Bonar Law in Paris when he entreated Poincaré not to enter the Ruhr. But I had ceased to be a civil servant over five years ago, and was a person of no public importance in England.' He nevertheless went on to express Mr Baldwin's views, as stated recently to him. Hitler stressed the importance he laid on a personal meeting with Baldwin.[82]

Baldwin's reactions, on Jones's return to England, were disappointing. As the excited Jones poured out his story over breakfast at No. 10, Baldwin described it as being 'like an Oppenheimer story'.[83] At Chequers the next weekend he got Jones to tell the story all over again to Mrs Baldwin, while he played Patience. Jones did so 'with gusto'. He took the opportunity to stress Ribbentrop's and Hitler's message, interrupting the game of Patience in order to do so. But Baldwin did not seem inclined to bother himself about it.

'Would Hitler be willing to fly and land at Chequers or in Thanet? S.B. did not fly and did not like the sea. Could the meeting wait till August when S.B. could go by car to some mountainous rendezvous?'[84]

This referred to Baldwin's annual visit to Aix. When Ribbentrop came to England for a short visit in late May and early June, he again lunched alone with Jones at the Carlton Hotel. Again the burning question was the proposed summit meeting. 'He agreed that to postpone the meeting until S.B. went on his holiday to Aix was undesirable, and if the attempt to secure S.B. failed the sooner Halifax met the Fuhrer the better.'[85] (A proposal that Halifax should meet Hitler had already been mooted, and put off for the moment.) Ribbentrop's keenness on the Baldwin-Hitler meeting was shown by the fact that he was prepared to bring Hitler to a point two or three miles off the British coast, to save Baldwin a long journey. It is interesting to note that at no point, on this visit, did Ribbentrop see Baldwin himself.

Tom Jones got Sir Horace Wilson to speak to Baldwin, who replied that 'he had been thinking a lot … and was in favour of meeting Hitler but was of the view that the meeting had better be quite open. This would be more in keeping with his own (S.B.'s) "character" … S.B. is willing to go to

Berlin, accompanied by Eden.'[86]

This, of course, was completely different from the original plan for secret negotiations, and, as in 1934, placed the whole thing on an official diplomatic plane (which was just what Ribbentrop had not wanted). 'I warned H.W. that the interviews must not get mixed up with the apparatus of the Foreign Offices, as one of its objects was to escape it.'[87]

Nothing more happened, and on 16 June Ribbentrop sent Jones an urgent message, asking to know what the chances were. Jones got Horace Wilson to organise an interview for him (Jones) with Baldwin and Eden at 10.15 p.m. that evening. Eden, who had already warned Baldwin that the 'object of German foreign policy was to divide us from the French',[88] objected strongly to the proposed meeting, 'and the matter was dropped'.[89]

This serio-comic episode shows us something of Ribbentrop's lack of judgment in the matter of deciding who had influence. Jones was a friendly figure, who knew many people. But when it came to foreign affairs, Baldwin listened to his experts, and appears to have taken very little notice of Jones's attempts to involve him in secret diplomacy.

Ribbentrop's visit to England in late May gives us an idea of his main British contacts. The picture is an odd one.

Apart from the attempted arrangements for the Baldwin–Hitler meeting, Ribbentrop also took advantage of his visit to have an interview, on 29 May (the day of his arrival) with Lord Monsell, First Lord of the Admiralty, with whom in the previous year he had concluded the Naval Agreement.[90]

He then proceeded to devote himself to the social round, with those empty-headed members of London society with whom he had become so popular. London hostesses adored him. Lady Cunard was, of course, enthusiastic. Mrs Corrigan[91] was another friend. As for Lord and Lady Londonderry, he was now so intimate with them that he was known as the 'Londonderry Herr'.[92]

On this occasion he and his wife dined at Mrs Corrigan's with the Londonderries and the Channons, after which he left to spend the Whitsun weekend with the Londonderries at Mount Stewart. The same weekend was spent by Tom Jones with the Astors at their house at Sandwich. Among those present were Lord Lothian and Sir Thomas Inskip, the recently-appointed Minister for the Coordination of Defence,[93] with his wife.[94]

When Tom Jones went up to London for his lunch with Ribbentrop, on Tuesday 2 June, he suggested that Ribbentrop should come down with him that afternoon to Sandwich, 'where, particularly, he would meet a Cabinet Minister in the shape of Inskip … as well as Lothian and the Astors'.[95]

Here was Ribbentrop's opportunity privately to influence a Cabinet Minister. Monsell, his other contact, had resigned on the very day Ribbentrop arrived in London. On the way down to Sandwich Ribbentrop prepared himself to please. Jones warned him that Inskip was an evangelical churchman.

Sure enough, Inskip brought up the Nazi persecution of the Church, over dinner. Ribbentrop's response showed just how much Anglo-German relations produced a window-dressing as far as German internal affairs were concerned, in this year of the '1936 pause':

'Von R. tactfully prefaced his defence by saying he knew the Archbishop of Canterbury and George Bell of Chichester, and went on to explain that a new Reformation was proceeding in Germany in the interests of religion.' Inskip, after questioning Ribbentrop about foreign affairs after dinner 'admitted … that he was impressed'.[96]

The main effect of the evening was, however, a memorandum which Lothian sent to Anthony Eden the next day. After the others had gone to bed Lothian, Jones and Ribbentrop had talked until 12.45, and the memorandum echoes Ribbentrop's views on Germany's needs.

Lothian had, of course, had extensive contacts with Ribbentrop before. The Rhineland crisis had convinced him of the dangers of pro-French policies. In an address at Chatham House on 2 April he had stressed these views.[97] On 23 May he had written to Lloyd George: 'the only way to peace is justice for Germany'.[98]

Lothian was not on particularly close terms with Eden, and his memorandum appears to have been ignored by him. Neville Chamberlain, to whom he sent a copy, sent a moderately termed reply in which he nevertheless admitted to 'a lurking suspicion that there is no real bona fides in Germany, and that she is merely playing for time until she feels herself strong enough to make her next spring.'[99]

On their return to London on 3 June, Jones arranged for Ribbentrop to meet Geoffrey Dawson. The rest of Ribbentrop's visit appears to have been taken up with junketings with his smart friends. Despite Lady Astor's criticism about the 'bad company' he kept – Lady Londonderry and Lady Cunard and their set – on 4 June he was once more with the Channons, at a dinner party at which Lady Jersey was also present. After dinner they all went to a night club, Ribbentrop 'looking like a jolly commercial traveller',[100] and by the end of the evening Ribbentrop had invited them all to the Olympic Games as Hitler's guests.

Ribbentrop seems, then, to have had two main circles in which he moved: smart London society and the Jones–Lothian–Astor group. The first had next to no influence; the second little, despite many contacts with members of the Government. His actual meetings with people of real influence were restricted to Monsell (who had just retired) and Inskip, with whom he seems to have had no further contact. Baldwin, and Eden, appear to have been unconcerned to make any informal contacts with Hitler of the type Ribbentrop desired.

There is no doubt, however, that a section of smart London society was, at this time, not only pro-German but pro-Nazi, headed by hostesses such as Lady Cunard, Mrs Greville and Lady Londonderry. 'Chips' Channon is typical of the kind of sentiments involved; impressed by the glamour and excitement of the new régime, and shallowly unconcerned by the realities behind it. As Harold Nicolson put it later in the year, 'The Channons have fallen much under the champagne-like influence of the Brunswicks, the Wittelsbachs and the House of Hesse Cassel … They think Ribbentrop a fine man, and that we should let gallant little Germany glut her fill of the reds in the East and keep decadent France quiet while she does so.'[101] Channon, the Conservative Member for Southend, was of American origin, and very much a social climber. It is said that Robert Byron once attacked his pro-German proclivities with the words: 'I suppose I should not be surprised to learn that you are prepared to sacrifice the interests of your adopted country in the supposed interests of your adopted class.' The Channons were very much the centre of the kind of set which 'went overboard' at the Nazi festivities at the Olympic Games, as we shall see.

German propaganda July–October

German propaganda continued well during the summer, with the prospect of the Olympic Games and the *Parteitag* in view. On 14 July the Duke and Duchess of Brunswick came over to attend, as guests of honour, a dinner of the Anglo-German Fellowship. (The cynical suggested that the date, Bastille Day, had been chosen to spit in the eye of France.) Lord Mount Temple was in the chair, Lord Zetland, Secretary of State for India, was an official guest, and the speakers included Lord Rennell, Lord Lothian and Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice.

Lord Rennell, toasting the Duke and Duchess, said that 'the large majority of the plain, simple people of this country were eagerly desirous of friendly relations with Germany'. Sir Frederick Maurice, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the British Legion, said the same for the ex-

service men. Lord Lothian, while calling for an end to 'the Versailles attitude of mind', begged his German friends not to underrate the influence their internal policies might have upon British policy.[102]

The dinner was extremely well-attended. 'Large crowd; many soldiers',[103] noted Bruce Lockhart. The Duke and Duchess were a particularly good pair to be fêted in this way, from the German point of view, as they were not only of the Imperial family, but also violently, and publicly, pro-Nazi. Ribbentrop had been visiting them only shortly after his return from England, and may have arranged for their invitation.

A vast number of people went to the Olympic Games in Berlin, which started on 1 August. Many were invited personally by Hitler or Ribbentrop, and hospitality was showered on them. 'From London alone,' writes Ribbentrop, 'I expected something like a friendly invasion. Lord Monsell … had accepted, and so had Lord Rothermere and Lord Beaverbrook … All our personal friends had been asked.'[104]

The experience of the Channons, as described in Chips's diary, shows the extravagance of the occasion. 'One was conscious,' wrote Chips, 'of the effort the Germans were making to show the world the grandeur, the permanency and the respectability of the new régime.'[105] They had their own ADC, who collected them in 'a grand car with a Storm Trooper at the wheel'. There were a series of grand receptions, of which perhaps the most extravagant was Goering's, though Ribbentrop had six hundred people to dinner at his house.[106]

Not all the British guests may have shared Channon's featherbrained reactions ('The Horst Wessel song … I thought had rather a good lilt.' 'The new régime … are masters of the art of party-giving.'[107] 'The English pour in, and are jealous of one another's activities and privileges. That we are perhaps the most favoured is due to George von Wüssow, our German buddy … beyond doubt Ribbentrop's most trusted agent'[108]), but they were all mightily impressed. The British press was full of tributes to the German national spirit; our sportsmen claimed that only such a régime could produce Olympic winners; other people returned and paid tribute to the German 'community spirit', which had been the work of 'that remarkable man of vision who directs the destinies of Germany', and who had done away with those class divisions which were eating away at Britain.[109]

While the Games were on, Ribbentrop had been appointed German Ambassador to Britain. The British press, in general, approved this choice; the tone of *Punch* is fairly typical. A cartoon depicted John Bull saying to Eden, who has announced Ribbentrop's arrival: 'Oh, but I know him well; show him in, Eden. Hope he's come to stay.'[110]

The Nuremberg Rally was to be the next showpiece. Many British people had been invited as official guests. Just before it took place, however, one more British politician trundled into Hitler's presence.

This was Lloyd George. As early as October 1935 he had invited Tennant to Churt, to tell him that he was thinking of going to Germany. The eventual visit was arranged by Conwell-Evans, and Lloyd George set off on 2 September with his children Megan and Gwilym, and Conwell-Evans and Albert Sylvester, who had been his Principal Secretary when he was Prime Minister. Tom Jones was invited to come as well (Conwell-Evans's letter made it clear to him that all expenses would be met by the German government),[111] and he and Lord Dawson of Penn[112] joined the party at Munich on the 3rd.

'I had, of course,' wrote Jones, 'hoped that S.B. would have had his meeting with the Führer before L.G. Now that interview will be more difficult than ever to arrange.'[113]

Hitler, according to Conwell-Evans, viewed Lloyd George 'with eyes beaming with benevolence and admiration'. He insisted on his wish for an understanding between Britain and

Germany. He stressed the dangers of Bolshevism. His message was, except in certain details, the usual one. What is striking is the attitudes of the two men.

At their second meeting, on 5 September, Hitler appears to have been concerned above all to flatter Lloyd George. Germany had realised, he said, at the end of the Great War, that 'it was not in the first place the soldiers to whom victory was due, but to one great statesman, and that yourself, Mr Lloyd George … It was you who galvanised the people into a will to victory. I have always thought so and I am glad to tell you in person.' Lloyd George, in reply, referred to Hitler as 'the greatest German of the age'. He talked about 'the advantage to Europe of strong men being in office', because 'a powerful statesman is in himself a guarantee of peace'. Above all, he gave Hitler the message that 'public opinion in Great Britain was to an increasing degree showing more and more understanding for Hitler's position and the one anxiety of British public opinion today was to bring about the closest cooperation between the two countries.'[114]

For Lloyd George, after the failure of his attempt to regain power with the New Deal policy of 1935, the 1935 election had been catastrophic. As Cowling puts it, 'It rubbed home the fact that, except in Wales – and really there too – he no longer mattered.'[115] At such a time, the flattery of once more being regarded as a 'great statesman' was bound to be effective. And he was bound to see, in his own rejection, the failure of the party system to allow the 'great men' to emerge in Britain. The opportunities dictatorship offered Hitler must have caused him considerable envy.

Lloyd George's article in the *Daily Express* of 17 September, which he produced on his return to England, is justly famous. In it he referred to Hitler as 'a born leader of men' who was trusted by the old, and idolised by the young.[116] In an interview with A. J. Cummings, published in the *News Chronicle* on 21 September, he described Hitler as 'unquestionably a great leader', who had 'effected a remarkable improvement in the working conditions of both men and women' (shades of Lloyd George's own New Deal, of which the solving of unemployment had been the keystone). Rather wistfully, he remarked that 'great leaders are not being thrown up by the European democracies'.[117]

Lloyd George's message to the British people was that the German people genuinely admired the British, and desired a better understanding with them, against the common Bolshevik enemy. 'The Germans have definitely made up their minds never to quarrel with us again.'[118]

The Nuremberg Rally began on 8 September. Every year, it had been Nazi policy to attract as many prominent British people as possible, but, in this Olympic Year, the attendance was enormous. Official invitations had been flung around. Lady Ravensdale,[119] in her memoirs, claims that it was curiosity above all that drove her to go:

> I knew I had better try and go to the Nazi Congress, and look if only once on this firebrand Hitler. Requesting Prince Bismarck at the German Embassy to secure me one ticket for one meeting, I was startled by being told I would receive an official invitation from the Führer himself for the whole session. This flung me into great agitation, as I did not want to be the guest of the German Government. But when I discovered that many English people were going, already invited by von Ribbentrop, who was now the German Ambassador, I accepted rather than be over-pernickety.[120]

Meriel Buchanan is another who claims to have been reluctant. According to her, it was Lady Houston who insisted that she should go:

> When in the summer of 1936 I was asked to go to the celebrations at Nuremberg, she insisted on my going, although I had been on the point of refusing the invitation. I did not enjoy that week at Nuremberg.[121]

Sir Harry Brittain[122] has described what it was like to be '*Ehrengäste* (Guests of Honour, as we were labelled)'. 'We arrived a couple of days before the *Parteitag* commenced, were met by one of the Führer's alert ADCs, and then taken up at once to the excellent rooms which were to be our headquarters for the next eight days. The Guest House which adjoined the Grand Hotel was the idea of the Fuhrer, following the last *Parteitag*.'[123] The day before the official opening an informal party took place in the Guest House, to enable the British guests to meet Hitler, and also Goering, Goebbels, Ribbentrop, Hess, von Schirach, Blomberg and the other notables of the régime.

Lady Ravensdale described Sir Harry Brittain, together with such people as Lord Mount Temple, Admiral Sir Barry Domvile, and Sir Frank and Lady Newnes,[124] as being members of 'Ribbentrop's kindergarten' at Nuremberg. Among the MPs who accepted invitations were Lord Apsley (National Conservative, Bristol Central), Sir Frank Sanderson (Conservative, Ealing), Sir Thomas Moore (Unionist, Ayr Burghs), Sir Arnold Wilson (Conservative, Hitchin) and Admiral Sir Murray Sueter (Conservative, Hertford).

The main effect of the rally was to arouse enormous enthusiasm for things German. It is interesting, in this context, to compare those accounts written after the war with those written at the time. In the later accounts we find evidence of lurking suspicions, and even distaste, together with the 1940s stereotype of 'the mad Hitler'. 'One felt at the end of that week with him that here was a man – a really unscrupulous fanatical ascetic – who would sink or swim for his party or his country, however wrong either were … Nothing could have exceeded the solicitude of our hosts, the lavishness of the hospitality, nor the perfection of every item of organisation. But what was all this drilling and this stupendous trumpeting leading to?'[125] 'When I shook hands with Hitler and looked into those strange mad eyes, lit up by a fanatical glare as he barked out an answer to the question Lady Houston had told me to ask, I felt a cold shudder run over me, as if I had seen a snake rearing up in front of me.'[126] These accounts, written with hindsight, bear little resemblance to contemporary descriptions of 'the human side of Hitler'.

Some British reactions to the rally were violently enthusiastic. The ceremony of dedication of the *Arbeitsdienst* was, to Sir Arnold Wilson, 'so simple, so solemn, so moving and so sincere as to merit, better than many customary religious rites, the title of worship … Such a ceremony would have satisfied the early saints, who held that *Laborare est orare:* it is in the tradition of the *Enchiridion* of Erasmus and of Kipling's Recessional. If we cannot understand it and value it we are the poorer thereby.'[127] Randolph Hughes, a former lecturer at the Universities of Paris and London, felt that 'it seemed as though, on this night, the prophecy had been fulfilled. Barbarossa, Germany, the Spirit of the Fatherland, was rearisen'.[128]

It was not just the ceremonies which impressed, however. As with the Olympic Games, this had been an opportunity to bring British people (particularly VIPs) in contact with the 'New Germany'. Everything was done to give them the best impression. And there were numerous affidavits in print to the health, vigour, and peace-loving nature of the German nation, in the latter part of this year, from people who had been to Germany either for these two great occasions, or on the other organised visits in the year (which had included a group of Labour MPs in May).

Beverley Nichols, in the *Sunday Chronicle*, wrote about what he had seen in Germany: 'Very few people in this country have the faintest conception of the strength of the new Germany. I do not mean the military strength, but the moral strength. Here is a nation united as no nation has ever been united before … There is so much in the new Germany that is beautiful, so much that is fine and great. And all the time in this country we are being trained to believe that the Germans are a nation of wild beasts who vary their time between roasting Jews and teaching babies to present arms. It simply is not true.'[129]

Those who had visited Germany in the past, when there were signs of 'material and spiritual

defeat, of helplessness and hopelessness', now saw that a revolution had taken place, and that they were in 'a country that in the truest sense of the word was a nation; a living whole of concordant wills; a people regenerate and restored, physically and morally sound, and set firmly and resolutely on the way towards grandiose masteries and achievements … Everywhere health, character and order, and a virtual absence of the evils that are their negation.'[130] This was contrasted with England, with its 'louts and hooligans and wastrels, sinister or feckless toughs or softies', who slouched and lounged at street corners.[131] 'The physical well-being of the nation's youth is a pleasure to see: the poorest are better dressed than of old; their faces bear witness to a psychological change for the better.'[132] Far too much anti-German propaganda was going on in Britain, and there was not enough 'admiration for the thoroughness … with which Germany has put her house in order'.[133] For all had changed: 'A general loss of ideals which amounted to something far worse than organized immorality is seen to have been replaced by a code of thought and action which – with the exception of sporadic and comparatively rare assaults against Jews, Catholics and non-Rosenberg-minded Protestants – is kindly and decent.'[134]

Not all the visitors had the wool pulled over their eyes, naturally. As Tom Jones said, 'We were, of course, on a conducted tour and to learn of Jews and Christians one has to come back to England.'[135] Others, while aware of the treatment of the Jews, were prepared to joke about it: 'It is true that if my name was Solomon, I would change it to Macdonald before visiting Germany, and covenant with a plastic surgeon to effect the facial alterations necessary to give me an Aryan aspect,'[136] wrote Admiral Domvile. And then there was still the wide spectrum of attitudes, ranging from embarrassment to complicity, which we have already charted in relation to the Jewish question. The interesting thing, however, in this year of the 'pause', is the number of people who noticed no Jewish persecution whatsoever. The Nazis had certainly changed their ways, for the moment. Letters to *The Times*, from maiden ladies visiting German schools, claimed to have detected no racialism at all. 'I find a most kindly and sympathetic feeling everywhere towards Jewish people', wrote one, 'and a sincere desire that they may have happier times in store.'[137]

Of one thing everyone was certain. 'Nobody who visits Germany can fail to be impressed with their friendliness towards us.'[138] The Germans were falling over themselves to be agreeable to their English guests. 'On returning from a visit to Germany perhaps you would kindly allow me to express my thanks to all the Germans that I met for their courtesy, hospitality and unfailing friendliness,' wrote Captain A. W. Lloyd[139] to *The Times*. This friendliness, on the part of the official hosts, was intended to impress on the British the importance of an Anglo-German Alliance.

It was with this end in view that Ribbentrop set off to take up his embassy in London on 26 October. But he 'saw how difficult [his] mission in London would be',[140] for despite the improved Anglo-German relations, he knew the attitude of the Foreign Office to be difficult. His interview with Vansittart in London had been depressing; this was even more true of a private discussion they had had in Berlin at the time of the Olympic Games. 'Never was a conversation so barren, never did I find so little response … One thing was clear, an Anglo-German understanding with Vansittart in office was out of the question.'[141] Once again, Ribbentrop was convinced of the danger of diplomats, and of the need to bypass the Foreign Office. At the Nuremberg Rally in September, he had tried once more to arrange a Baldwin–Hitler meeting, but was told by Dawson 'that S.B. would not leave London in winter, that the Coronation would fill the spring, and that he saw no prospect of a meeting with Hitler before July or August [1937]'.[142]

One of Ribbentrop's reasons for hope, however, was King Edward VIII, who had shown such sympathy for the German cause. 'King Edward VIII had appeared to be a possible friend of

Anglo-German understanding', he later wrote. He was a 'factor in the British situation which had contributed to my having been sent to London.'[143]

Just before Ribbentrop set off for England, a delegation of German ex-service organisations arrived in this country. German sources saw this as 'hardly a coincidence'. Ribbentrop had helped in selecting the Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha to head the veterans; the Duke was a grandson of Queen Victoria, but not a Hohenzollern, and he was so enthusiastic a Nazi that he almost always wore a brownshirt uniform. The ex-service note was always an effective one to play. All this was 'further confirmation that Herr von Ribbentrop's term as ambassador will be accompanied by renewed effort to win the British public to more sympathy with Germany and German ideas and plans'.[144]

Public opinion and European events, June–September

In June Duff Cooper, one of the small group in the British parliament whose Francophilia 'distinguished them from most members of the Conservative party'[145] made a speech in Paris, to the Great Britain–France Society, in which he 'insisted that Great Britain and France were bound to stand together, that their interests were identical and that they were threatened by the same danger'. Though he did not mention Germany, 'my meaning was clear'.[146]

Now, this speech was clearly in line with official British foreign policy. Cooper, as Secretary of State for War, had had it cleared by the Foreign Office. Yet such was the state of opinion in the country, that his words caused an immediate storm. The King strongly disapproved[147] (an interesting contrast to his father's disapproval of his own speech in favour of Germany the year before). So did the Labour Party, which initiated a debate on the matter in the House of Commons, claiming that he was at variance with the Government in going so far in support of France. He also noted 'the lack of enthusiasm that it aroused in my own party'.[148]

The speech set off many ripples. The Germans naturally interpreted it 'as expressing an intention to renew the *entente cordiale* against their country',[149] and their Press urged 'the supporters of an Anglo-French alliance – that is to say, the group round Mr Churchill and Sir Austen Chamberlain, and members of the Cabinet like Mr Duff Cooper' to think again, and not allow Great Britain to be seduced into 'as far-reaching a tie as an alliance'.[150] The reference to the Russian connection is obvious.

Germany's friends hastened to reassure her. Lloyd George, for example, told Hitler that though 'certain members [of the Cabinet] were making difficulties, as Mr Duff Cooper's lamentable speech delivered recently in Paris had clearly shown', the Prime Minister was a 'supporter', and if Germany rejoined the League, 'the support of British public opinion would certainly be enlisted.'[151]

The widespread reactions to Duff Cooper's speech showed that the British public's aversion to the French connexion was still strong. As Émile Mireaux said in July: 'It would be idle to deny that Anglo-French relations are passing through a grave crisis.'[152]

Two major political events occurred in July; the first of them was the agreement between Germany and Austria on the 12th. The British press, on the whole, congratulated Germany on this step towards European peace. Some perspicacious political observers saw, however, more behind it. As early as 4 July the French diplomat Pierre Viénot had foretold the agreement, and anticipated that British and French public opinion would take it as a sign of Hitler's pacific intentions, 'whereas in fact it will merely mean that the latter wishes to remove the only obstacle to an agreement with Italy'.[153] The likelihood of a German–Italian pact had emerged, and for many

people this made it even more urgent to get to terms with Germany. As Harold Nicolson wrote on 16 July, after a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee, 'the general impression left was that the majority of the National Party are at heart anti-League and anti-Russian, and that what they would really like would be a firm agreement with Germany and possibly Italy by which we could purchase peace at the expense of the smaller states'.[154] A correspondent to *The Times*, on 27 July, put this attitude clearly: 'It is platitudinous to assert that the sympathy of most voters in this country is with Germany. She has captured their imagination. She has good friends throughout our Empire. The recent Austro-German and Italian accord affords Great Britain the opportunity of sinking pride in the cause of peace, and points the way, through cooperation with this new Central European bloc, by which France may finally be persuaded to modernise her outlook.'[155]

The start of the Spanish Civil War, on 18 July, was an even more significant event. Though at first many people on the British Right hoped that the nationalist revolt would swiftly succeed, and put an end to the 'Communist-inspired chaos' into which the Republic had declined, it soon became clear that an extensive civil war had developed. And to many this meant that here was another outpost of Communism just beyond our shores, to match France's *Front Populaire.*

'We are for the first time in the presence of a Government whose settled policy is to organise, finance, and arm those who agree with its social aims in every country in the world … Spain may well not be the last of the fruits of the action of the peace-loving Soviets,'[156] wrote Sir Francis Lindley to *The Times*, in a letter which was considered important enough to be placed in the first position at the top of the page. 'Moscow agents have for years been preparing "heavy civil war" (the technical Bolshevist expression) in Spain',[157] he wrote a couple of weeks later. Sir Henry Page Croft[158] referred to the Terror in Spain which was 'widely organised by large numbers of agents imported from Moscow before the election took place', and stated that 'the news that Moscow had organised a Bolshevist coup to take place by August 1 was widespread throughout business circles in Spain'. From this he went on to general remarks about Bolshevik policy, which were very much in line with the views he had been holding since the 1920s. 'Is it not the declared object of the USSR to promote revolution and ruin in every "non-Soviet" country, and in spite of the elimination by murder of practically all the leading disciples of Lenin by his successor, Stalin, has the USSR or its leader ever abandoned this policy?'[159]

It would be wrong to associate all pro-Nationalist feeling with such views; it would be even more wrong to presume that all those British people who were pro-Nationalist in relation to Spain were, by corollary, pro-Nazi. By the time the Spanish Civil War was at its height there was, as we shall see,[160] very little necessary relation between one set of views and the other. But at this particular moment in time, the apparent relation between the Franco-Soviet Pact, the Front Populaire and Communist activities in Spain led many Conservatives into an anti-Bolshevist scare, in which Germany appeared to be Europe's bulwark against disintegration.

'There can be no doubt that a Communist or Anarchist régime in Spain would have repercussions in other parts of Europe,'[161] the readers of the *Nineteenth Century and After* were told. It is small wonder that Harold Nicolson could write, in early August, 'The Spanish situation is hell … The pro-German and anti-Russian tendencies of the Tories will be fortified and increased.'[162]

The position was stated very clearly in the 'Current Comments' section of the September number of the *English Review*:

> In spite of the efforts of politicians and the Press, a strong fellow-feeling with the Germans is growing in England. Italy, France and Spain have made their contributions recently towards the awakening of the English.

Italy caused us to remember the functions of a navy, she stirred a dying memory of colonial activity; she taught us the value of being boycotted; she killed a treacherous interest in Geneva and brought us out of our post-war coma, and, above all, drew attention to the widening breach between the House of Commons and the people.

Our grateful thanks are also due to M. Léon Blum. It is stimulating to have an outpost of Soviet Russia so near our shores. It calls our old men from their golf and our young men from their cricket. It quickens the conversation in bars and clubs. It is of more value than many recruiting posters. To us, who think more easily of types of men than abstractions and policies, M. Blum supplies an interesting counterpart to Herr Hitler. We can place their pictures side by side and say 'This is France' and 'This is Germany'…

… It is impossible for Englishmen to watch without sympathy the best types in Spain struggling against the gross products of the polls and the armed mobs … The Spanish Civil War has given us further grounds for a closer understanding with the Germans.[163]

Three Journals

A good area of study, for right-wing attitudes in these months, consists of two journals, the *Saturday Review* and the *English Review,* and a third journal, newly-created, entitled the *Anglo-German Review.*

Until 1936 the *Saturday Review,* the property of that eccentric millionairess Lady Houston, had, on the occasions when it dealt with German affairs, on the whole taken an anti-Nazi view, as we have seen.[164] It is true that, at the time of the Saar plebiscite in January 1935, Hitler was praised in an editorial for the contrast he made with the 'gang of international humbugs' who ruled Britain, but in the same number there were warnings against Hitlerism, and no really pro-German attitude (as opposed to negative attacks on the British leadership) emerged until March 1936 when, as we have seen, the Rhineland *coup* led to violent praise of Hitler and of his régime. Here was an example of a man who could really lead his country.

Given the journal's overriding interest in Italy, it was natural that April and May, with Italy's victory over Abyssinia, should have been devoted to that country. The imminence of a Popular Front government in France, however, brought out the Bolshevist danger, particularly in articles by Meriel Buchanan,[165] and the journal began a call for a 'benevolent Dictator' for England. Baldwin was 'a Lilliputian when confronted with dictators like Hitler or Mussolini, men who, in their various ways, have set out to achieve a definite goal which spells for their respective countries, Greatness and Security'.[166]

By 6 June Lady Houston was petitioning the King to become Britain's Dictator, like Hitler and Mussolini. The *Saturday Review* continued this idea throughout June. As 'Historicus' said on 20 June, 'If I were King, I would join hands with those States which have purged themselves of decadence and Bolshevism. I would tell them that Britain, too, is for purity of race and for the high traditions of the past. Together we could rid Europe of the canker that is destroying us, the cancer that gnaws at our vitals and our hearts, and the creeping dry rot that spreads through all the nations called Bolshevism.'[167]

This campaign had died out by the end of June, and the next month contained nothing in the way of pro-German comment. By the beginning of August, however, amid articles like 'Red Spain',[168] 'Red Terror in Spain'[169] etc., Lady Houston found herself involved in a running battle, in the columns of the *Morning Post* and the *Daily Telegraph*, with the Duchess of Atholl. This controversy pinpoints the pro-German views which Lady Houston, and the *Saturday Review,* now held.

The whole thing started with a letter to the *Morning Post* from Lord Queenborough,[170] a peer who had become obsessed with the international Bolshevik plot, and who sallied forth into print in various places in late 1936, in order to proclaim this danger, and the German role as a bulwark against it. The Duchess of Atholl[171] wrote a spirited reply to this, in which she quoted from *Mein Kampf* to show the nature of the Nazi régime.[172] Lucy Houston now joined the fray, quoting the Bolshevist leaders, who 'for years past have openly declared it their aim to destroy the power of Great Britain before they can realise their ambition for Bolshevising the whole world', and asked whether the Duchess would rather be under the heel of Hitler or under the heel of Stalin. The controversy became centred on the respective merits and demerits of Germany and Russia. One of Lady Houston's last salvoes, to the *Daily Telegraph*, was reprinted on the cover of the *Saturday Review* on 12 September. 'Before Hitler took the reins', she wrote, 'Germany was the underdog, and when France said "Couche-toi" she had to obey. But Hitler is a man of vision. He saw the only way to put Germany back into the centre of the picture again was by Germany becoming stronger, much stronger than her neighbours, AND HE PERFORMED THIS MIRACLE. But why should this fact be taken as a danger to England when Germany has offered us the hand of friendship and has given no sign of having any desire to be a danger to us? GERMANY HAS ARMED TO DEFEND HERSELF AGAINST SOVIET RUSSIA BECAUSE SHE SEES IN BOLSHEVISM THE DESTRUCTION OF CIVILISATION.'[173]

The *Saturday Review* naturally echoed its owner's views. 'Britain's place is with Hitler and Mussolini against Stalin,'[174] said one article. Lord Queenborough contributed articles on the international Bolshevist plot, on 29 August, and 19 September, in which he described National Socialist Germany as having 'produced order from chaos … created a people united in service and determined to oppose the enemies of Christendom by every means in their power, and, despite the gloomy prophecy of financiers and Labour misleaders … enormously strengthened her economic position'.[175] Douglas Wilson wrote of 'Germany's bulwarks against Communism' (5 Sept.), 'C.H.' described 'What Hitler has done for Germany' (19 Sept.), 'Kim' asked, 'Is it Germany or the Reds?' (26 Sept.), and Meriel Buchanan contributed articles on 'Olympic Wonderland' (1 Aug.) and 'What Hitler has done for Germany' (19 Sept.). The correspondence columns were full of support for Lady Houston in September and October, from readers advocating joining Germany against Russia. Britain should 'at once make an alliance with Germany and Italy. They are *bona fide* nations, and want peace in Europe'.[176] A closer friendship between Germany and Great Britain was 'the earnest desire of countless people in both countries'.[177]

The *Saturday Review* continued in much the same way until Lady Houston's death in January 1937, after which the new owners pursued a completely different policy. Under Lady Houston's idiosyncratic rule, it had been a paper of many enthusiasms, mainly in a die-hard mould. Its main concerns had been anti-Bolshevism, anti-democracy, and an admiration for nations which 'got things done', coupled with contempt for Britain's present rulers. But above all it had campaigned for rearmament, and for a strong Britain. When, in 1936, it turned to pro-Nazism, it followed the pattern of all those who, while praising Germany, nevertheless sought a strong, armed Britain.

Compared with the *Saturday Review*'s exaggerated style, vulgar exhibitionism, and extreme views, the *English Review* was a rather staid monthly. It catered for a more educated public, and its views were always expressed with measure. It stood for a certain brand of High Toryism, and, as we have already seen, had shown more than a passing interest in Italian Fascism. Up to the end of 1935, however, the tone of the journal had been more anti-Nazi than pro-Nazi.[178]

At the end of 1935 Jerrold gave up the editorship, and Wilfrid Hindle, Editor of the *Review of Reviews*, took over both as Editor and as Foreign Editor. As with the *Saturday Review*, articles favourable to Germany appeared in the *English Review* at the time when most monthlies were

registering their reactions to the Rhineland coup. In April there was an article on 'The Spirit of the New German Army' by Dr James Murphy (the Nazi propagandist), which reassured the British public by saying that the army was basically a good, healthy activity for German youth, and not really a military instrument; and there was an article on Ribbentrop (who was in the news, as he had just arrived in London with the new Peace Plan). As with the *Saturday Review,* there followed a short interval in which other foreign events took greater prominence. In July there was another change of editorship. Derek Walker-Smith, a young barrister, took over. Sir Charles Petrie rejoined as Foreign Editor.

The number for July contained the first of three articles by Anthony Ludovici,[179] entitled 'Hitler and the Third Reich'. In it he referred to the 'new religious zeal' which had spread through Germany; the German people had been 'not only raised from the dust, but also shown a star or ball of fire which will lead them to the fulfilment of their destiny'. Everything was 'reserved, serene, almost reticent, as if beneath the inexpressible joy that everyone feels, there stirred the constantly sobering reflection that the defeat, the humiliation and the shame of yesterday was a judgement, a penance for the mistakes of the older generation'. The Nazi movement had united the country 'as no country has been united since the Renaissance'. Indeed, 'the last great movement of anything like the same importance as National Socialism was the Reformation'.[180]

In the same number Gilbert Armitage, reviewing Wyndham Lewis's *Left Wings over Europe,* suggested that we should 'close our ears very resolutely against all the disingenuous propaganda that assails us about the cruel and wicked Nazis, who, at any rate, have not yet assassinated an entire reigning family in a cellar, and butchered some millions of "class enemies" as the nice, kind, almost democratic bolshies have done'.[181]

The August number contained Ludovici's second article, on the German labour camps, and the back-to-the-land movement. It also included an article by Lord Queenborough, entitled 'World Plan in Action', in which he referred to a Bolshevist, Masonic plot in Europe 'as a prelude to a World State under Marxist control', and praised 'the National Socialist revolution in Germany', which had 'restored the unity and strength' of this rampart.

In the September number came the important 'Current Comments' to which we have already referred.[182] The third Ludovici article dealt with sterilisation policy: 'Great as are the reforms discussed in my last article, and wonderful as is the tribute their success pays to the inspiration of the Führer, they are, however, as nothing compared to his innovations in a far more difficult and pitfall-strewn field – the field of human biology.'[183] It is interesting to note that Sir Charles Petrie, affected by the Spanish Civil War and (possibly) by the new German – Italian understanding, was moved, in this number, to grudging praise of Germany: 'Whatever may be said against Signor Mussolini and Herr Hitler, they at least spared their respective countries the horrors from which Spain has suffered … If Conservatism in England allows itself to become entangled with the Soviets in an anti-German front in a quarrel which is none of England's, then it will have signed its own death-warrant.'[184]

Other strong interests in these three months had been Italy and Belgian Rexism (Petrie), anti-Liberalism (Wyndham Lewis), the Abyssinian War (articles by Evelyn Waugh) and – rearmament. Another interest was the revival of agriculture.[185]

From October onwards the *English Review* shared in a common reaction of the Right to Hitler's demand for colonies at the Nuremberg Rally in September. On this, public opinion had had strange reactions. Some of those who were favourably inclined towards Germany believed that we should give them colonies, or at least their former mandates; some of those who disapproved of Germany took the same view. But a large section of that Conservative Right which found much to admire in Germany was also solidly tied to British imperial interests. In the *English Review* praise for

Germany continued alongside a strong line on the colonies.

The continued existence of a strong element of enthusiasm for Germany in Great Britain was shown not only by the continued success of the Anglo-German Fellowship, but also by the successful creation of a journal specifically aimed at a wide pro-German readership, the *Anglo-German Review.* This journal, whose first number appeared in November 1936, was edited by C. E. Carroll, a former editor of the British Legion paper.[186]

The first number set the tone. Carroll set out to attract ex-service readers with articles by Bruce Bairnsfather and F. D. Bone stressing the importance of comradeship with Germans. Lord Redesdale praised Hitler's sincerity and importance as a bulwark against Bolshevism. Lord Mount Temple described the Anglo-German Fellowship. Randolph Hughes reported on his recent visit to Germany, and the Nuremberg Rally. The historian Sir Raymond Beazley,[187] who was to be a frequent contributor, wrote on 'German History and Anglo-German contacts'. There was a goodwill message from Lloyd George.

This was to be the pattern of the monthly editions of the journal. In December's number, however, there was an article of particular interest by Sir Roger Chance, Bt., who was later, in 1938, to be Press Attaché at the British Embassy in Berlin. In it he described himself as 'a man of the Centre, an Aristotelian in politics' who, while he found many things to criticise in Germany, hesitated to pass a final judgment on 'the loss of freedom of thought and speech, of the political and racial freedom that we value and intend to preserve'. This was because, in place of these things, Germany had achieved things which, in our system, we could not: 'In Germany, shorn of political democracy, you find much evidence of social democracy, and an absence of class prejudices that we should do well to study.' Above all, he wrote, if Germany wanted a method of government which we disliked, 'that surely is her affair'.[188]

The Abdication

The year ended with the Abdication crisis, and on the whole people's attention was deflected from German problems. It is particularly interesting, however, to note German reactions to the event. Ribbentrop describes himself as sitting in his study 'racking my brains to see whether there was anything to be done to influence the course of events … But what could a foreign ambassador do?'[189] He did, in fact, succeed in getting the German press not to publish the sensational reports on the situation.[190]

Why did the Germans have 'the greatest interest in [Edward's] remaining King'? Why did Ribbentrop feel that 'with the Abdication the Anglo-German cause had lost one opportunity'? The answer lies in Edward's attitude towards Germany over the last few years, and the impression he had given, particularly in private, of his intention to follow a pro-German policy.

It was common gossip, in the years before Edward's accession to the throne, that he was strongly in favour of Nazi Germany. Given his nature, it was hardly likely that he would have kept such opinions to himself. As early as 13 July 1933, Bruce Lockhart heard him, in conversation with Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia, saying that 'it was no business of ours to interfere in Germany's internal affairs either *re* Jews, or *re* anything else', and adding that 'dictators were very popular these days and that we might want one in England before long'. Lockhart described him as 'quite pro-Hitler', and added that he expected the Prince of Wales had been 'influenced regarding Germany by – and –, both of whom are ardent Hitlerites'.[191] In October 1934, Lockhart once again described him as being 'pro-German' in conversation.[192]

We have already seen the furore that the Prince's British Legion speech in June 1935 aroused. This public statement caused many people to comment on the source of the Prince's views, and,

probably wrongly, to suggest Mrs Simpson.[193] A few days before the speech, Bruce Lockhart had described the Prince as being 'very strong for friendship with Germany: never heard him talk so definitely about any subject before'.[194]

Alongside these more public statements, Edward had, as Prince of Wales, been having 'frequent, often lengthy' talks with Leopold von Hoesch, the German ambassador, who became convinced that he felt 'warm sympathy' for Germany, which was 'deep-rooted and strong enough to withstand the contrary influences to which they are not seldom exposed'.[195] In one of these talks in April 1935, the Prince apparently criticised the 'too one-sided attitude of the Foreign Office'.[196]

Frances Donaldson, in her excellent biography of Edward VIII, has examined carefully the evidence for the King's indiscretions in relation to Germany during his short reign, and has come to the conclusion that 'however one evaluates any particular document, one cannot ignore either the quantity and variety of the witnesses or the similarity of their evidence'.[197] Edward appears to have been convinced that he could influence British foreign policy. He chafed at the restrictions of constitutional monarchy, and, in the view of at least one of his German interlocutors, wished eventually 'to concentrate the business of government on himself.'[198] There was general agreement among the Germans to whom he spoke at this time that, though 'his friendly attitude towards Germany might in time come to exercise a certain amount of influence on the shaping of British policy' he would 'naturally have to impose restrictions on himself at first',[199] because his 'sincere resolve to bring Germany and England together would be made more difficult if it were made public too early'.[200]

Several witnesses make it clear that Edward undertook activity on a pro-German basis at the time of the Rhineland crisis; though, from what we have seen of British attitudes at that time, he was merely one of a tide, in his opinions, and it would be hard to assess if he had any influence. The King's views, whatever his German contacts might think, were, however, no secret. His was not a secretive nature. His reaction to Duff Cooper's speech in June has shown us the extent to which he made his pleasure or displeasure known, and there could be no mistaking, on that occasion, the fact that his views ran directly counter to those of the Foreign Office. By the end of the year, he was described by 'Chips' Channon as 'going the dictator way', and being 'pro-German, against Russia and against too much slip-shod democracy'. In a wild moment of surmise, Channon added that 'I shouldn't be surprised if he aimed at making himself a mild dictator, a difficult task enough for an English King.'[201]

This, of course, was written at the time of the crisis surrounding the impending Abdication, a time when rumours of dictatorship or governmental overthrow were rife. Sir John Reith, on 6 December, wrote: 'I suppose anything might happen in the country now; it might be the end of the monarchy, or we might have the King as a sort of dictator, or with Churchill as PM, which is presumably what that worthy is working for.'[202] Hore-Belisha believed 'that the Conservatives will resign, and that the premiership will be hawked about to anyone who will take it, and that Winston Churchill will summon a party meeting, create a new party and rule the country.'[203]

Edward is unlikely to have thought of dictatorship in real terms. His pronouncements on such matters, from 1933 onwards, were more of a criticism of what was wrong in Britain, and an admiration for what was happening abroad, than a coherent statement of aim. He was similar to so many other armchair politicians of those days, and spoke more like an ordinary citizen than like anyone with responsibility. This is where the Germans got him wrong. He did not have 'tremendous influence';[204] he did not have very much influence at all. He was widely considered, in Whitehall, in the Government, and in society in general, as being 'irresponsible'.

Ribbentrop was wrong, therefore, in thinking that Baldwin had wanted to get rid of Edward

because of his pro-German views. If there was any relief in Government circles at the Abdication, it was on more general grounds. Bruce Lockhart gathered 'that Whitehall wants King to abdicate in any case – altogether too irresponsible'.[205] Harold Nicolson said that the 'bulk of House and of serious people in City and Whitehall want King to go anyway; too irresponsible and now his prestige damaged'.[206] The events surrounding the Abdication had showed Baldwin himself that 'the King was absolutely devoid of any appreciation of his responsibilities, physically and mentally incapable of appreciating an iota of them'. Baldwin thought 'he had the mind of a child', and did not think 'he would ever realise what he had done himself'.[207]

Rumours were, of course, rife about German influences on the King. People were convinced that Mrs Simpson was being 'used' by Ribbentrop, through the Cunard set. Lady Donaldson, and others, have shown how little likelihood there was in this theory. It was widespread enough, however, to reach the Abdication debate in the House of Commons, where Willie Gallacher, the Communist MP for West Fife, introduced a sour note with the following words:

> I wish to draw attention to the fact that Mrs Simpson has a social set, and every member of the Cabinet knows that the social set of Mrs Simpson is closely identified with a certain foreign Government and the ambassador of that foreign Government.[208]

George Buchanan, of the ILP, was perhaps nearer the mark with his intervention, which similarly struck a jarring note in the emotional occasion:

> Who has not heard the tittle-tattle and gossip that is going about? If he had not voluntarily stepped from the throne, everyone knows that the same people in the House who pay lip service to him would have poured out scorn, abuse and filth … If he is a tenth as good as you say, why are you not keeping him? Why is everyone wanting to unload him? Because you know he is a weak creature.[209]

1 Duff Cooper, *Old Men Forget*, London, 1953, p. 196.
2 Tennant, *True Account*, London, 1957, p. 192.
3 Letter to *The Times*, from T. P. Conwell-Evans and E. W. D. Tennant, 17 March 1936. See also Tennant's letter of 24 March 1936.
4 *Hansard*, 28 Nov. 1934.
5 Lord Winterton: b. 1883. Unionist MP for Horsham and Worthing Division since 1904. Became Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in 1937·
6 Winterton, letter to *The Times*, 13 January 1936.
7 See, e.g., Sir Arnold Wilson, *(The Times*, 7 Feb. 1936), General Sir Ian Hamilton (*The Times*, 13 Feb. 1936).
8 *Daily Mail*, 30 Jan. 1936.
9 Franklin R. Gannon, *The British Press and Germany 1936–1939*, Oxford, 1971.
10 Lord Charnwood, letter to *The Times*, 18 March 1936. (Godfrey Rathbone Benson, 1st Baron Charnwood, b. 1864, had been Liberal MP for Woodstock in the 1890s.)
11 Viscount Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, London, 1954, p. 201.
12 Emile Mireaux, 'Anglo-French Relations', *The Nineteenth Century and After*, July 1936, p. 2.
13 A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*, London, 1961. (Penguin edition, 1964, p. 116.)
14 Baron Geyr von Schweppenburg, *The Critical Years*, London, 1952.
15 Winston Churchill, letter to *The Times* 20 April 1936.
16 Lord Hugh Cecil, letter to *The Times*, 23 April 1936.
17 Gannon, *The British Press and Germany 1936–1939*, Oxford, 1971, p. 92.
18 *News Chronicle*, 2 March 1936 (quoted in Gannon, pp. 92–3).
19 1st Baron Dickinson, b. 1859, Liberal MP for St Pancras North, 1906–18. Member of Labour Party since 1930.
20 Dickinson, letter to *The Times*, 5 March 1936.
21 Harold Nicolson, letter to Vita Sackville-West, 16 March 1936 (*Diaries & Letters* 1, 250).

22 *Headway,* April 1936 (*Headway* was the journal of the League of Nations Union).
23 *Spectator,* 13 March 1936.
24 *Observer,* 8 March 1936.
25 *The Week,* quoted in Patricia Cockburn, *The Years of the Week,* London, 1968, p. 171.
26 See Gannon, op. cit., pp. 93–8, for press reactions to the coup.
27 Harold Nicolson, Diary, 9 March 1936 (*Diaries and Letters,* 1, 248).
28 Ibid., 10 March 1936 (*Diaries and Letters,* 1, 248).
29 Ibid., 10 March 1936 (*Diaries and Letters,* 1, 249).
30 George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier Diary,* 11 March, 1936 (Orwell, 1, 198).
31 Ibid.
32 Harold Nicolson, letter to Vita Sackville-West, 12 March 1936 (*Diaries and Letters,* 1, 249–250).
33 See Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler,* p. 107 (meeting of Ministers, 13 March 1936).
34 Eliot Crawshay-Williams, letter to *The Times,* 4 April 1936. (Lt.-Col. Eliot Crawshay-Williams, b. 1879, former Liberal MP for Leicester.)
35 'Sir Ralph Glyn's Letter', *Reading Mercury,* 21 March 1936.
36 Sir Arnold Wilson, 'Walks and Talks', *The Nineteenth Century and After,* April 1936, pp. 525–6.
37 Sir Austen Chamberlain to Count Vladimir d'Ormesson, 28 March 1936, quoted in N. Thompson, *The Anti-Appeasers,* Oxford, 1971, p. 105.
38 Sir Ernest Bennett, letter to *The Times* 23 March 1936.
39 Arthur Asquith, letter to *The Times,* 31 March 1936.
40 Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, *Diary,* 27 March 1936.
41 *The Reith Diaries,* entry for 7 March 1936, p. 209.
42 Sir Ralph Glyn, letter to *Reading Mercury,* 28 March 1936.
43 Lord Mount Temple, letter to *The Times,* 4 April 1936.
44 Letter to *The Times,* 27 March 1936. My italics.
45 See pp. 42–3.
46 *Saturday Review,* 7 March 1936.
47 'What a Man', by Kim, *Saturday Review,* 14 March 1936.
48 Daughter of Sir George Buchanan, former British Ambassador in Moscow.
49 See letter to Ribbentrop, p. 141.
50 Londonderry, letter to *The Times,* 12 March 1936.
51 Jacobsen, op. cit., p. 814.
52 Tom Jones, letter to Lady Grigg, 8 March 1936 (*Diary with Letters,* p. 181).
53 W. H. Dawson, 'Hitler's Challenge', *The Nineteenth Century and After,* April 1936.
54 Wife of Lord Apsley, National Conservative MP for Bristol Central, who was to be PPS to the Minister for Coordination of Defence from 1936 to 1939.
55 Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier Diary,* 16 March 1936 (Orwell, 1,203).
56 *The Times* found it hard to find enough anti-German letters to balance the correspondence. (See letter from Barrington-Ward to Kennedy, 24 March 1936, quoted in Gannon, p. 99.)
57 Letter from Tom Jones to Lady Grigg, 4 April 1936 (*Diary with Letters,* p. 185).
58 Ibid.
59 Letter from Tom Jones to Abraham Flexner, 25 April 1936 (*Diary with Letters,* p. 188).
60 Sir Arnold Wilson, 'Walks and Talks', *Nineteenth Century and After,* April 1936, p. 514.
61 Harold Nicolson, letter to Vita Sackville-West, 22 March 1936 (*Diaries and Letters* 1, 253).
62 Harold Nicolson, Diary, 25 March 1936 (*Diaries and Letters,* p. 254).
63 See A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War,* p. 124.
64 'Bravo, Mussolini!' by Kim, *Saturday Review,* 25 April 1936.
65 See *Saturday Review,* 9 May 1936.
66 Lord Snowden, letter to *The Times* 8 April 1936.
67 See Lord Hugh Cecil, letter to *The Times,* 16 April 1936.
68 John W. Hills, letter to *The Times,* 20 April 1936.
69 *The Ribbentrop Memoirs,* London, 1954, p. 56.
70 Tom Jones, letter to Lady Grigg, 15 April 1936 (*Diary with Letters,* p. 186).
71 Tom Jones, letter to Abraham Flexner, 25 April (*Diary with Letters,* p. 187).
72 Sir Maurice Peterson, b. 1889, later Ambassador to Russia.
73 Bruce Lockhart, *Diary,* 26 May 1936.
74 Tom Jones to Abraham Flexner, 23 May 1936 (*Diary with Letters,* p. 209).
75 Ibid.

76 Sir Robert Vansittart, b. 1881, Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1930–8.
77 *The Ribbentrop Memoirs*, London, 1954, p. 57.
78 See Chapter 4.
79 Tom Jones, Diary, 11 May 1936 (*Diary with Letters*, p. 194).
80 Ibid.
81 Tom Jones, Diary, 16 May 1936 (*Diary with Letters*, p. 197).
82 Tom Jones, Diary, 17 May 1936 (*Diary with Letters*, pp. 199–201).
83 Tom Jones, Diary, 20 May 1936 (*Diary with Letters*, p. 202). It is interesting to note that, on *18 May*, the day of Jones's return, Lothian was writing to Lloyd George of the need for a summit meeting between Baldwin and Hitler (see Cowling, p. 134). Had Ribbentrop contacted Lothian as well?
84 Tom Jones, Diary, 22 May 1936 (*Diary with Letters*, p. 205).
85 Tom Jones, Diary, 2 June 1936 (*Diary with Letters*, p. 215).
86 Tom Jones, Diary, 8 June 1936 (*Diary with Letters*, p. 218).
87 Ibid.
88 Eden, *Facing the Dictators*, p. 374.
89 Tom Jones, Diary, 16 June 1936 (*Diary with Letters*, p. 224).
90 Bolton Meredith Eyres-Monsell, 1st Lord Monsell, cr. 1935. It is interesting to note that Monsell was just resigning, to be replaced by Sir Samuel Hoare.
91 Laura Corrigan, another famous London hostess, of American origin.
92 Henry Channon, Diary, 29 May 1936 (*'Chips'*, p. 62).
93 Sir Thomas Inskip, later 1st Viscount Caldecote, cr. 1939.
94 Sister of the 8th Earl of Glasgow, q.v.
95 Tom Jones, Diary, 2 June 1936 (*Diary with Letters*, p. 215).
96 Tom Jones, Diary, 2 June 1936 (*Diary with Letters*, p. 215).
97 See J. R. M. Butler, *Lord Lothian*, London, 1960, pp. 213–14.
98 Letter from Lothian to Lloyd George, 23 May 1936, quoted in Cowling, p. 134.
99 Chamberlain to Lothian, 10 June 1936, quoted in Butler, *Lord Lothian*, p. 215.
100 Henry Channon, *Diary*, 4 June 1936.
101 Harold Nicolson, *Diary*, 20 Sept. 1936.
102 *The Times*, 15 July 1936.
103 Bruce Lockhart, *Diaries*, 14 July 1936 (p. 348).
104 *Ribbentrop Diaries*, London, 1954, p. 63.
105 Henry Channon, Diary, 6 August (*'Chips'*, p. 106).
106 *Ribbentrop Diaries*, p. 63.
107 See Channon, *Diary*, 6 August 1936 (p. 106).
108 Ibid., 7 August 1936 (pp. 107–8).
109 Lord Rennell, letter to *The Times*, 27 August 1936.
110 *Punch*, 19 August 1936.
111 T. P. Conwell-Evans to Tom Jones, 29 August 1936 (*Diary with Letters*, p. 239).
112 Physician-in-Ordinary to the King.
113 Tom Jones, Diary, 3 Sept. 1936 (*Diary with Letters*, p. 240).
114 Conwell-Evans's notes on the conversations of 4 and 5 Sept., printed in Martin Gilbert, *The Roots of Appeasement*, London, 1966, Appendix II, pp. 197–211.
115 Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler*, p. 41.
116 *Daily Express*, 17 Sept. 1936.
117 *News Chronicle*, 21 Sept. 1936.
118 *Daily Express*, 17 Sept. 1936.
119 Lady Ravensdale, daughter of Lord Curzon and sister-in-law of Sir Oswald Mosley and Major 'Fruity' Metcalfe.
120 Baroness Ravensdale, *In Many Rhythms*, London, 1952, p. 195.
121 Meriel Buchanan, *Ambassador's Daughter*, London, 1958, p. 225.
122 Sir Harry Brittain; former Unionist MP for Acton (1918–1929), Vice-President of the English Speaking Union, Member of the Executive Committee of the Anti-Socialist Union, Hon. President of the Friends of Italy.
123 Sir Harry Brittain, *Happy Pilgrimage*, London, 1949, pp. 227–31.
124 Sir Frank Newnes, 2nd Bt., b. 1876, former Liberal MP for Basset-law (1906–10), Chairman of George Newnes, Ltd., Director of *Country Life*.
125 Sir Harry Brittain, *Happy Pilgrimage*, London, 1949, pp. 227–31 (this is described as being 'as dictated in the late autumn of 1936').

126 Meriel Buchanan, *Ambassador's Daughter,* London, 1958, p. 225.
127 Sir Arnold Wilson, 'Walks and Talks', *Nineteenth Century and After,* Oct. 1936, pp. 506–11.
128 Randolph Hughes, 'Germany Rearisen. A brilliant, impressionistic account of a visit to Germany and of the amazing pageant of the German National Congress', *Anglo-German Review,* Nov. 1936, pp. 11–13.
129 Beverley Nichols, in the *Sunday Chronicle,* quoted in the *Saturday Review,* 12 Sept. 1936.
130 Randolph Hughes, *The New Germany,* London, 1936, p. 1.
131 Ibid., p. 11.
132 Sir Arnold Wilson, 'Walks and Talks', *Nineteenth Century and After,* Oct. 1936, p. 503.
133 Charles Cunningham, *Germany To-Day and To-morrow,* London, 1936, p. 33·
134 Ibid., p. 35.
135 Tom Jones, letter to Abraham Flexner, 16 Oct. 1936 (*Diary with Letters,* p. 273).
136 Admiral Sir Barry Domvile, *By and Large,* 1936, p. 235.
137 Miss Annette Meakin, letter to *The Times,* 11 Nov. 1936 (see also Miss Hilda M. Hawkes's letter of 5 Nov.).
138 Derek Walker-Smith, 'Current Comments', *English Review,* Oct. 1936.
139 Captain Arthur W. Lloyd, parliamentary artist of *Punch.*
140 *The Ribbentrop Memoirs,* London, 1954, p. 67.
141 Ibid., p. 65.
142 Tom Jones, Diary, 10 Sept. 1936 (*Diary with Letters,* p. 259).
142 *The Ribbentrop Memoirs,* London, 1954, p. 70.
144 Berlin Correspondent, *The Times,* 22 Oct. 1936.
145 Neville Thompson, *The Anti-Appeasers,* Oxford, 1971, p. 46.
146 Duff Cooper, *Old Men Forget,* London, 1953, p. 202.
147 Ibid., p. 202.
148 Ibid., p. 204.
149 T. P. Conwell-Evans, 'Germany in July–August', *Nineteenth Century and After,* Oct. 1936, p. 416.
150 *Frankfurter Zeitung,* 30 June 1936.
151 Lloyd George – Hitler interview, 4 Sept. 1946 (in Martin Gilbert, *The Roots of Appeasement,* p. 201).
152 Émile Mireaux, 'Anglo-French Relations', *Nineteenth Century and After,* July 1936, p. 1.
153 Harold Nicolson, Diary, 4 July 1936 (*Diaries and Letters,* 1, 268).
154 Harold Nicolson, Diary, 16 July 1936 (*Diaries and Letters,* 1, 269).
155 Philip Gribble, letter to *The Times,* 27 July 1936.
156 Sir Francis Lindley, letter to *The Times,*7 August 1936. Lindley was a retired diplomat, and a Privy Counsellor.
157 Sir Francis Lindley, letter to *The Times,* 22 August 1936.
158 Sir Henry Page Croft, b. 1881, MP for Bournemouth 1918–1940. Created Lord Croft in 1940.
159 Sir Henry Page Croft, letter to *The Times,* 12 Oct. 1936.
160 See Chapter 8.
161 Diplomaticus, 'The Situation in Spain', *Nineteenth Century and After,* Sept. 1936, p. 293 ('Diplomaticus' was the pseudonym of a former Spanish diplomat).
162 Harold Nicolson, Diary, 8 August 1936 (*Diaries and Letters,* 1, 270).
163 'Current Comments', *English Review,* Sept. 1936, p. 204.
164 See Chapter 1.
165 *E.g.* 'Bolshevism Gains Ground' (25 April 1936), and 'Moscow Intrigues' (6 June).
166 'England Wants a Dictator', by Kim, *Saturday Review,* 2 May 1936. See also 'England's Sore Need – A Benevolent Dictator', by 'Historicus', *Saturday Review,* 2 May, and 'Two Men who love their Country' (Mussolini and Hitler), by 'Historicus', *Saturday Review,* 9 May.
167 'If I were King', by 'Historicus', 20 June 1936.
168 By C. H., *Saturday Review,* 1 August 1936.
169 By Meriel Buchanan, *Saturday Review,* 1 Aug. 1936. See also the other numbers of the journal in August and early September, particularly 'The BBC and Spain' by Arthur Loveday (29 Aug.), and 'Truth about Spain; and this Conspiracy of Lies', by Father F. Woodlock, SJ (5 Sept.).
170 A former Unionist MP, ennobled in 1918, who had been President of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations, 1928–9, and who was to become so again in 1940. An Hon. Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.
171 Unionist MP for Kinross and West Perth. A right-wing Conservative who had resigned the Conservative Whip after the India Bill in 1935.
172 Her sudden change of view (from 1936 she became pro-sanctions and anti-Franco) was due to a reading of *Mein Kampf* (Thompson, p. 120).

173 *Saturday Review,* 12 Sept. 1936.
174 'Under which Flag', by Historicus, *Saturday Review,* 8 Aug. 1936.
175 'All that we hold most dear', by Lord Queenborough, *Saturday Review,* 19 Sept. 1936.
176 Reginald de Heaton, letter to *Saturday Review,* 24 Oct. 1936.
177 R. Charles Lines, letter to *Saturday Review,* 31 Oct. 1936.
178 See Chapter 1.
179 Captain Anthony Ludovici, former secretary to Rodin. Served in Great War. Contributor to right-wing journals, from *Everyman* to *The New Pioneer.*
180 Anthony Ludovici, 'Hitler and the Third Reich', *English Review*, July 1936.
181 *English Review,* July 1936.
182 See p. 233.
183 Anthony Ludovici, 'Hitler and the Third Reich – III', *English Review,* Sept. 1936.
184 Sir Charles Petrie, 'Foreign Affairs', *English Review,* Sept. 1936.
185 Two members of Lymington's circle wrote for the *English Review* at this time – R. H. Dorman Smith, on 'The Revival of Agriculture' (July), and Ludovici. See also 'The Importance of Trees' by H. C. Elwes (Sept.).
186 Cola Ernest Carroll was what the French would call a 'grand mutilé'. In the World War he had been badly wounded in 1916 (with 50% disability from wounds), but had become an Air Force pilot. Shot down and captured, he had escaped just before the Armistice. In 1940, he was imprisoned under 18B.
187 B. 1868. A graduate of Balliol, who had been a Fellow of Merton from 1889 to 1908, and then Professor of History at Birmingham University from 1909 to 1933. Many visits to Germany.
188 Sir Roger Chance, 'Germany Wants Justice', *Anglo-German Review,* December 1936.
189 *The Ribbentrop Memoirs*, London, 1954, pp. 69–70.
190 See Gannon, op. cit., p. 106, and *The Ribbentrop Memoirs*, p. 70.
191 Bruce Lockhart, *Diary,* entry for 13 July 1933.
192 Ibid., entry for 9 October 1934.
193 *E.g.* Chips Channon, Whitsuntide 1935.
194 Bruce Lockhart, op. cit., entry for 27 May 1935.
195 Dispatch from Hoesch, 21 Jan. 1936, quoted in Frances Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, p. 197.
196 Quoted in Donaldson, op. cit., p. 194.
197 Donaldson, op. cit., p. 204.
198 Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, quoted in Donaldson, op. cit., p. 199.
199 Hoesch, quoted in Donaldson, op. cit., p. 197.
200 Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, quoted in Donaldson, op. cit., p. 199.
201 *'Chips'*, entry for 22 Nov. 1936.
202 *The Reith Diaries*, entry for 6 Dec. 1936, p. 191.
203 *'Chips'*, entry for 22 Nov. 1936.
204 Quoted in Donaldson, op. cit., p. 202.
205 Bruce Lockhart, *Diary,* entry for 3 Dec. 1936.
206 Ibid., entry for 4 Dec. 1936.
207 *Reith Diaries*, entry for 16 April 1937, p. 196.
208 *Hansard,* 10 Dec. 1936.
209 Ibid.

[8]

1937 – An Interlude?

THE YEAR 1937 has often been seen as a calm interlude in Anglo-German relations. It was nevertheless a very significant year from the point of view of public opinion. Major events, in relation to Germany, might be absent from the headlines and leader columns, but Germany was present in many people's minds. The new respectability of Germany, so stressed by Nazi public relations in 1936, seemed to be continuing, though it was somewhat dented by the Nazi conflict with the Churches; at the same time, however, German military strength was growing at what, to some, seemed an alarming extent. In the field of foreign policy the question of relationships between Italy and Germany appeared of prime importance. Alongside all this, the question of Germany's former colonies came very much to the fore at this time, and produced some very strange lineups indeed.

So 1937 presents us with a very tangled situation, in which one tangible fact appears to have been the continued popularity of Germany in a considerable minority of the community, while another was the growing conviction, in other circles, that Germany presented a positive threat to this country. The sense of foreboding, which was to become so strong in the next couple of years, was now becoming a major feature in the press, but it was matched by a continuing search for friendship with Germany.

Much has been made of Ribbentrop's lack of success as ambassador to Great Britain. The enthusiasm with which the British press had welcomed him on his appointment waned when it became clear that he was going to be something of an absentee ambassador, keeping up his major activities in Berlin at the same time. He was tactless, too, not only in public acts but in his general attitudes, which were those of a Foreign Minister rather than an ambassador. There was a strong rumour that he had given the Nazi salute to the King; though this was untrue, it reflects the general view of his arrogance, which was hardly tempered by the way in which, even at functions in his honour, he harped on the fact that colonies should be given to Germany.[1] Ribbentrop was his own worst enemy; though he earnestly believed himself to be a consummate diplomat, he continually put his foot in it.

The high point of Ribbentrop's tactlessness came with the speech he made at the Leipzig Fair in March 1937. In this speech, which was widely reported, he harped once more on the colonial question. The general interpretation put on his remarks was: 'We want these colonies – we think we ought to have them, and if you do not give them to us we shall have to take them.' Though Conwell-Evans tried valiantly, in *The Times*, to put a different gloss on things, saying that 'the tone of the speech was conciliatory throughout',[2] Lord Cecil of Chelwood spoke for many when he said that, on the basis of a reading of the verbatim report of the speech, 'I still think that my understanding of its meaning was the natural one'.[3]

One must not exaggerate, however, the effect of Ribbentrop's blunders upon British views of Germany. He became widely considered as an ambassadorial failure, certainly, but comment on this appears very much to have been directed at him, as a person, and little of the obloquy appears to have rubbed off on the Nazi leaders in general, even though it was noted that German attitudes to Great Britain had hardened in early 1937. The main effect of importance appears to have been

on Ribbentrop's own views. It was he who regarded his own personal failure as that of the whole German peace offensive with Britain, and it was his resultant Anglophobia which was to make him eventually, at the beginning of 1938, persuade Hitler that the likelihood of British friendship had receded.[4] The reality was quite different, but Hitler's resultant policies were to make Ribbentrop's forecasts come true.

In early and mid-1937, all still seemed set fair for continuing Anglo-German understanding, from the British side. As Gannon puts it, 'the critics and the prophets had been confounded and the Nazi régime had fully consolidated itself upon an undeniable mandate from the majority of the German people, and had entered the ranks of stable governments'.[5] People had either got used to Nazi internal excesses, or believed (on the basis of the 1936 pause) that they had moderated, or believed that they were merely the product of a handful of extremists. The virtues of the new Germany, which were there for all to see, continued to be extolled by British visitors. And, as far as German foreign policy was concerned, many people (despite a certain reticence on the part of the British press) were prepared to give credence to Hitler's important Reichstag speech of 30 January, on the fourth anniversary of the National Socialist revolution, in which he proclaimed that the 'period of so-called surprises' was over, and that Germany had no further territorial claims.[6]

German appeals for friendship were still having their effect on a considerable section of the British nation. As a contemporary public opinion poll showed, Germany came third in the list of people's favourite countries. The United States, of course, came first, with thirty-seven per cent; France came second, with twenty-eight per cent. Germany came third with fifteen per cent. This fifteen per cent for Germany consisted, however, of people who liked Germany *above all other nations*. The poll did not necessarily mean that the other voters were anti-German, though of course many of those who chose France probably were (as were the small number who chose Russia). Those who chose the United States were not really making any comment on the European situation. Despite the uncertainty of opinion polls, this poll appears to be significant in showing (as opposed to June 1939, when only three per cent put Germany at the top of their list) that a sizeable minority of the British public were *positively* pro-German in 1937; and it suggests that many more were not actively anti-German.[7]

Though, in early 1937, people referred to a 'deterioration in relations' between Britain and Germany, public opinion in Great Britain still appears to have contained a considerable lobby for Anglo-German friendship and/or collaboration. Before we touch on these issues, however, we must study the two discordant notes, the Church question and the colonial question, and attempt to assess their impact on British opinion with regard to Germany in 1937, as well as that of the Spanish Civil War.

The Church Question

Though, in the early stages of Nazi power, the Catholic Church had had no real problems, the situation of the Protestant Churches had from the start been problematical. As Grunberger puts it, 'The Protestants, with their synodal organisation and division into variously oriented regional churches (Landeskirchen) … were wider open to Nazi permeation than the more autonomous and compactly structured Catholics'.[8] They were also weaker in the face of Nazi interference. In 1933, after Hitler had organised Church elections for the creation of a national Church which would bring together the disparate Protestant groups, three-quarters of the votes were polled for the 'German Christians', overt supporters of the Nazi movement. The National Bishop (Reichsbischof) was Dr Ludwig Müller, who gave the 'German Christians' their watchword: 'Ein Volk! Ein Gott! Ein Reich! Eine Kirche!', and described Hitler as having given form to original

commandments given by God to the German people, which spoke to them 'in the history of our people (Volk), which has grown out of blood and soil'.[9] Some of the early excesses of the new Church, particularly on the racial question, caused strong reactions, but Hitler and the Nazi leaders, by attempting a more moderate approach, persuaded many Protestant leaders to continue to collaborate with the *Reichsbischof*.

The main opposition formed itself into a group called the *Bekennende Kirche*, or Confessional Church, which, as Grunberger points out, was originally not so much concerned with opposition to National Socialism as with 'a determination to defend the integrity of the Church against state interference'.[10]

It inexorably found itself, however, reacting against the 'new religion', which was 'a revolt against the First Commandment' and, 'having nothing to do with positive Christianity', was 'Anti-Christianity'.[11] One of the leading figures in the Confessional Church was Pastor Niemöller.

'The very fact of the Confessional Church's existence', writes Grunberger, 'undermined the credibility of Bishop Müller, and in 1935 the régime created a new Department of State for Church Affairs under Reichsminister Kerrl … Müller, who refused to resign, was left by the authorities to rot away in full regalia (as the contemporary phrase had it).'[12]

In March 1935 700 pastors were imprisoned, and the official policy of the Church Department and the Gestapo was from now onwards one of repression, with many hindrances in the way of travel, free speech, residence, etc., for members of the Confessional Church.[13] The outside world was aware of these activities, but it was not until 1937 that their full impact came home to observers. In this year Hitler, after two years of attempts to capitalise on the differences within the Protestant camp, finally ordered the Church to provide itself with a new constitution. At the same time some of the most powerful protests of the German clergy gained prominence in the outside world.

In the spring of 1937, many pastors were arrested.[14] The climax came with the arrest of Niemöller on 1 July.

Reactions to all this in Great Britain were interesting. The main protests came from British churchmen: George Bell, the Bishop of Chichester, wrote powerful letters to the newspapers, praising the patriotic spirit of the Evangelical Church leaders, and suggesting that 'they would not lift their voices with such power, nor would they make so urgent an appeal to the rulers of Germany, unless they were convinced that the soul of their Fatherland and the soul Of Germany's youth was in peril'.[15] There was, he claimed, 'an unchecked warfare against the Christian faith'[16] in Germany. Other prominent churchmen protested at individual acts of the Nazi government, such as the death of Dr Weissler, Head of the Secretariat of the Confessional Church, in a concentration camp in March.[17] There was always, of course, Arthur Headlam, the Bishop of Gloucester, who while 'admiring the tenacity with which the Confessional Church defended the liberty of religion against the State', was 'disappointed that this rigid attitude was maintained', as 'the cause of Christianity would be stronger if the religious forces were united and not divided' (which, on the 1933 showing, would mean that the Confessional Church would have been subordinated to the 'German Christians'). Hitler had, by ordering this unity, 'done just what a wise ruler might be expected to do'. Headlam interpreted Hitler's order as an attempt to give the German Evangelical Church freedom to manage its own affairs, and felt that 'the Confessional Church should be ready to seize the opportunity and should cooperate loyally with all other sections of the Church in creating a Constitution which will give freedom and independence'. He saw Hitler as a 'moderating influence', and regretted both the extremists in the Nazi party and the 'fantastic mythology' of the German Christians, which he saw as minority tendencies, to be repudiated.[18] At the Church Assembly, in June, he declared that 'he did not think there was persecution of religion

in Germany'. It was, in his view, 'persecution of political action', because 'in all cases where a pastor had been arrested, it had been due to the fact that the pastor had disobeyed a definite order'. This was in no way an attack on religion.[19]

Leaving aside the maverick Headlam, there is no doubt that most churchmen were seriously disturbed by the persecution of the Protestant churches in Germany. After the arrest of Niemöller, the British quality press also took up the cudgels on their behalf, particularly the *Manchester Guardian* and the *News Chronicle*. It is nevertheless true to say that, except in the immediate aftermath of Niemöller's arrest, the religious question did not appear, to many non-churchmen, to be the major issue in Anglo-German relations. It was yet another example of Germany's internal policies which, if German friendship was of importance, needed to be explained away in much the same way as anti-Semitism had been. It is, however, interesting to note that, in a sense, it was more important to the British than anti-Semitism, in that it was presumed to touch British people more closely. A *Times* leader in October was typical in its statement that German internal policies, however awful, were 'no one else's concern', except in 'the matter of religious persecution'.[20] This lack of concern with Nazi anti-Semitism is, as we have seen, typical of many in the period.

Apart from the continuing reaction of many churchmen, and the short-term reaction of certain sections of the press, however, it is hard to see the British public as having been very strongly affected by the Church issue in 1937. Writings on Germany in the monthlies scarcely touched on the question, either to castigate or to excuse it. It does not appear, in any real sense, to have impinged upon the progress of Anglo-German affairs, in that those who were already against the Nazis appear to have continued in that opinion, those who were already for them were undeterred, and those who were little concerned with the matter appear to have remained unconcerned.

For some, at least, it was a foreign matter; even a keen churchman like Sir Arnold Wilson could see it as 'the struggle … between the totalitarian church and totalitarian state', and declare that it was 'confined mainly to the leaders and spokesmen of either side'. He added that 'every Englishman I spoke to in Germany regarded English ecclesiastical utterances on the subject as lacking understanding, and likely to do more harm than good'.[21]

It would be wrong, also, to see all the British clergy and laity as having taken up a strong anti-Nazi line on the Church question. At the height of the persecution in 1937, a society called the Anglo-German Brotherhood was flourishing in England. Founded in June 1936 by Baron Friedrich von der Ropp, it was devoted to understanding between the clergy and laity of the German and English Churches.

All this would seem highly innocuous, were it not for the fact that in this context the German Church does not seem to have meant that part of it that was opposed to the 'reorganisation and unity' which was being brought about by the present régime in Germany. Friedrich von der Ropp was a skilful, and apparently moderate, propagandist. To Tom Jones, who described him as 'an Evangelical Baron', he confidentially depicted himself, in September 1936, as 'trying to keep the Christian flag flying in a pagan land, outside the sphere of the quarrelling theologians, who have ruined Hitler's early attempts to keep the Brown Shirts in church'. This apologia for Hitler, comporting blame for those who created disunity, was a clear attack on the Confessional Church, which Ropp diminished by describing it as concerned with purely theological quarrels; the whole religious dispute was thereby completely misreported. 'Religion in Germany, according to Von der Ropp, has been cursed by intellectualism'. Ropp gave Jones the impression that he himself was suspect to Rosenberg and his collaborators (who, of course, were violently anti-Christian in a way that official Nazi policy, which wished to use the Christians, was not). He suggested that when the German common soldiers heard the Gospel story 'in a simple and intelligible form', it appealed to many of them.[22]

Friedrich von der Ropp was a friend of Philip Conwell-Evans, whose name, hardly

surprisingly, figured prominently on the English Committee of the Anglo-German Brotherhood, as did the Revd A. J. Macdonald, DD, who wrote, in 1936, an article entitled 'Why I believe in Hitler', in a volume called *Germany in the Third Reich*,[23] published in Frankfurt. There is little doubt that many of the members of the Brotherhood, and even of its committee, were sincere believers in Anglo-German friendship but in no way propagandists of the Conwell-Evans or Macdonald type. They were no doubt won over by the skilful and apparently moderate words of Ropp. What is significant, however, is that such a society could flourish at the very time of the major persecution of the Confessional Church. In 1939 the Brotherhood affiliated itself to the Link.[24]

Ropp visited England on many occasions in these years always 'persuasively pleading for England's cooperation'. At one social gathering, Tom Jones noted that a certain Captain Ellis had an argument with him, 'obstinately maintaining that the essence of Christianity was freedom and that of National Socialism tyranny, and that there could be no commerce between them'.[25] Quite clearly, Ropp's position was to plead for understanding of the German government's actions. To a dinner of the Anglo-German Fellowship in February 1937 he declared that 'Herr Hitler has given the Church a free hand', and that Hitler was 'a very religious man himself'.[26]

The Catholic Church began to present a problem in Germany in 1937. There is no doubt, however, that it was the persecution of the Protestant pastors which, for the outside world, held the centre of the stage. As we have seen, this persecution does not appear to have had any lasting effect on the opinions that people already held on the German régime.

The Colonial Question, October 1936 – December 1937

In the early years of the Nazi régime Hitler had on the whole played down the 'colonial question', relating to the future of the former German colonies, which since Versailles had been mandates under the control of Great Britain, France, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Belgium. This reticence had been based on the desire for friendship with Great Britain, or at least her neutrality; Hitler realised that for this an avoidance of conflict on naval and imperial questions was essential.[27] The colonial question was, of course, occasionally used as a counter in the diplomatic game, but on the whole the impression Hitler wished to give was the one outlined in an interview given to Ward Price on 5 August 1934, where he declared that he would not give the life of a single German to acquire any colony in the world.

Towards 1936, however, the policy began to change. Ribbentrop, who had been put in charge of colonial affairs in mid-1935, had gradually prepared the ground, by conversations with leading British politicians, for an attempt to bring them round to a favourable view of Germany's needs,[28] and at the 1936 Nuremberg Rally Hitler had, as we have seen, made a public statement demanding the return of colonies. One of the main reasons for this, as was shown by Hitler's Memorandum to the Locarno powers in April 1936, and by Schacht's later speeches, was the need for raw materials; but Jacobsen also puts forward the theory that this change of tactics denoted a different attempt at pressure on Great Britain, as a kind of 'trump card' in his game, to try to divert her from European problems.[29] It may also have been caused by the weight of advice from Ribbentrop, who, with his adviser Graf von Dürckheim-Montmartin (a specialist on German South-West Africa), had developed a strong interest in the colonies.

Whatever the reason for the new policy, it was pressed with considerable enthusiasm. Hitler made it a major factor in his speech of 30 January 1937. Ribbentrop spoke about it on every possible occasion, public and private, apparently completely unaware of the various currents of opinion that were possible in his audiences, and in the general public that read reports of his

speeches. As Tom Jones said on 12 February 1937: 'On Wednesday I had lunch with von Ribbentrop. He makes very much the same speech every time one meets him. This time he put most emphasis on Germany's request for the return of Colonies.'[30] The climax of Ribbentrop's campaign came with the Leipzig Fair speech in March, which by its tone as much as its content caused a furore.

The campaign continued throughout the year, and on 3 October Hitler produced another important speech insistently hammering home the same theme.

Throughout this period, from September 1936 to December 1937, the colonial question played a large part in British thought on German affairs, culminating in a vast correspondence in *The Times* in October 1937. Thereafter it was to remain a major interest, as the number of books published on it in 1938 and 1939 was to show.[31]

If the aim was to distract Great Britain from European problems, this was in part successful. If the hope was to maintain friendship with those sections of the British public who were already well disposed towards Germany, the picture is not so clear. The colonial question cut across many of the political lineups in relation to Germany.

There were, of course, many people who were in favour of giving Germany back some, at least, of her colonies. They had a wide variety of reasons. Lord Noel-Buxton felt that 'the justification used for [Germany's] deprivation is, it must be confessed, untenable', and that 'if justice is our aim we cannot lightly dismiss it'.[32] Lord Astor's view was that 'History shows us that, on the whole, nations, like individuals, react to the treatment accorded to them, and that generosity and justice bring their reward.'[33] Germany, he asserted, was not perfidious: she had, admittedly, taken steps to obtain her security, but only after requests for security based on equality had been repeatedly refused. 'Was this so unnatural?'[34] Bishop Carey[35] felt that 'To say "No" to Germany's natural desire for colonies' was 'morally wrong' for the British, who were 'saturated with colonies'.[36] Why was it always necessary to be so suspicious of Hitler, he wondered. 'He has broken agreements, but so should I have, for they were unjust and repressive. But all my instincts tell me that if Herr Hitler pledged the Reich to certain agreements – *e.g.* not to raise a black army in Tanganyika – he would keep his word.' All this suspicion was so ridiculous that 'if Herr Hitler buys a bootlace he is suspected of something sinister'.[37] The Bishop of Southampton asked what Leo Amery, one of the main opponents of the German demand 'would … feel like if he was a German?'[38] Sir George Shee felt that 'Germany must inevitably wonder what has become of the old tradition of fair play';[39] 'our chief national characteristic, the love of fair play', he wrote on another occasion, was contrary to 'the continuation of the post-war treatment which too often had the appearance, so utterly contrary to our traditions, of "hitting a man when he is down".'[40]

The concern for justice felt by such people, and by others such as Lord Allen of Hurtwood, Gilbert Murray, and Arnold Toynbee, was matched, in many, by a concern for the possible results of refusal.

Sir Ernest Bennett, MP, while stressing the justice of Germany's case and the 'harsh, vindictive, indefensible' nature of the Versailles Treaty, nevertheless asked whether 'those politicians and journalists who take up a *non possumus* attitude on this matter' were 'prepared to face the horrors and risks of another war in order to defend the last outstanding blunder of Versailles'.[14] Lord David Cecil felt that 'but for this question there is no direct occasion of quarrel between Germany and ourselves', and that 'it would be most foolish to create a formidable foe over a matter that should be adjustable'.[42] Apart from the colonial question, he said, there was 'no reason why England and Germany should not live in perfect unity together.'[43] Sir Arnold Wilson had 'reached the conclusion that the peace of Europe for the next few decades may well turn … upon our attitude towards the colonial clauses of the Treaty of Versailles', and that 'the retention of former

German colonies and the maintenance of the *status quo* in Africa do not, in my judgment, constitute one of those "just causes" for which the present generation in this country are prepared, or should be asked, to fight'.[44] He felt that the British had 'no reason to regard with regret or shame the decision taken at Versailles to deprive Germany of her colonies', because, though the action was 'impolitic', it was 'supported by the most ancient of precedents, those of war'. He was aware that Germany was unlikely to be satisfied with one or two mandates, because 'l'appétit vient en mangeant'.[45] He agreed that our colonies were 'not "possessions" in the sense that we could pawn or barter them', and that 'the inhabitants had rights', and that if the British left, legally they should return to independence.[46] Nevertheless, 'such is the urgency of the situation' that 'the attempt to seek a solution … is worth making'.[47]

Among the many voices that spoke up for the German claim there were a good number who did not necessarily approve of German policies, but who accepted that Germany had, in justice, 'a *prima facie* case'.[48] There were also, however, a number of those who were strongly pro-German in any case, and for whom this was a further way of making their views felt. William Harbutt Dawson, for example, entered the fray brandishing his anti-Versailles banner.[49] Mosley made it clear that he approved German claims. But it is interesting to note the extent to which, for those Conservatives who had become pro-German in 1936, the colonial question, while not proving a stumbling-block to these general sympathies, nevertheless provoked their strong opposition in this particular area.

The opponents of German colonial claims had had reasons which were as varied as those of the supporters. There were those who, from an ingrained anti-Germanism dating from before the Nazi era, opposed tooth and nail any proposal to let Germany, who had after all been beaten in the war, obtain any remission of her punishment. There were others, a large number, whose anti-Nazism made them oppose any concessions. Both these groups, and many other people, were concerned about 'German nastiness' to the native populations. Grim stories were told about pre-war unpleasantness,[50] and in some cases it was suggested that Nazi cruelty to the Jews should warn Great Britain about the fate in store for native populations.[51] On a more moderate note, other people suggested that it was, perhaps, for the native populations themselves to decide, rather than to be parcelled out in a new colonial distribution. The strongest opponents of giving in to German demands were, however, Conservative imperialists who saw the British mandates as now being part of the British Empire, and some of whom saw them as an integral part of imperial defence.
Foremost among these people was Leo Amery, who conducted a doughty correspondence in *The Times* on the matter, and also fought it out in the House of Commons and elsewhere. Amery believed that if the mandates were returned, we would be sacrificing the native populations and at the same time running strategic risks to imperial defence.[52] He believed that Britain and Germany could be friends, and also that Britain should oppose 'any foreign policy which … could be aimed at the encirclement of Germany, or commit us to taking sides with her in a Russo-German quarrel', and should 'show in economic matters, that we are willing to make sacrifices'. The British should not, however, 'by well meant but irresponsible utterances, encourage in Germany a belief that there is, in fact, any possibility of her securing a reversal of the territorial settlement of 1919, which is precluded by the facts of the case and not by lack of goodwill'.[53]

Sir Henry Page Croft went further than this. He saw recent German propaganda as a 'stand and deliver' attitude, and said that in *no circumstances* should any colonies be ceded.[54] At the Conservative Party Conference in October 1936, he seconded Duncan Sandys's motion asking for a Government assurance that no mandated territories would be ceded.

That conference had made it clear that the Conservatives were, as a body, strongly against the cession of the Mandated Territories. Many Conservatives, like Amery, Page Croft and Sandys,

were anti-German in this. Others, however (and there were a fairly large number of them), had certain pro-German sympathies, but were still firm on this question.

As Derek Walker-Smith put it, reporting on the Party conference, 'the Conservative Party and Englishmen generally like and admire the German people. They respect the great genius of the German Führer; they appreciate the vigour and integrity of the present German administration'.[55] Conservatives appreciated the difficulties which had caused Germany to abandon Parliamentary institutions, 'to which the long experience of history has bound us with stronger ties than we can expect to find in the countries of Europe,' and would 'not quarrel with Germany on account of Germany's internal arrangements'. In many of these there was much to admire, and 'where we do not admire so wholeheartedly we exercise discretion in judgement'. As far as foreign policy was concerned, Conservatives would not 'quarrel with Germany on account of their legitimate desire to include all German people within the boundaries of the Reich', nor would they quarrel with her 'in the interests of Soviet Russia'. There was 'one thing, and one thing only' that could divide the British and the Germans, and that was 'a predatory intention on their part with regard to the Mandated territories'. The British Government should think 'nationally and imperially' on this matter, otherwise they would give the impression 'that expansion at the expense of the British Empire is the one form of expansion that they would not oppose'.

The Patriot, which praised the *Daily Mail* for 'urging the cultivation of friendship with Germany and recognising the unchanging work of Soviet Russia in promoting world revolution',[56] attacked Mosley for advocating 'the handing back of the mandated colonies to Germany'.[57] Lord Esher, who was against handing back the colonies, nevertheless objected to Princess Bibesco's expressed fear that a native African might be no better treated than a native German, because to him it was 'obvious that a native German, if he obeys the Government and does not object to the loss of his freedom, is very well treated.'[58] E. D. O'Brien noted that Germany had few friends on the Left in England, and that 'her friends here – and they are many – are drawn from the Right and from the non-political section of the population which believes in Germany receiving a fair deal'. Germany should, however, remember that 'her English friends are nationalist first and pro-German second'. It would be a tragedy if Britain became an opponent because of 'a tactless presentation of the German case'.[59] With regard to Germany's 'right' to have colonies it was important to state that 'Germany does not possess colonies because she was beaten in the war'. Even if Germany's 'demands abroad' were 'sometimes unreasonable', however, 'her claim to have achieved incredible successes in the face of incredible difficulties at home can be denied by no fair-minded person'.[60]

The colonial question did not really alter basic views on Germany. This is true of everyone, of whatever opinion, who took part in the debate. Basic attitudes to Germany, of whatever kind, remained much the same, and the colonial debate appeared to be completely separate, and in no way influential.

The tenor of the debate was summed up by *The Times* First Leader on 28 October, entitled 'The Claim to Colonies', which stated:

> The truth is that British public opinion is probably far ahead of the Government in its conviction that a clear understanding with Germany will have consequences more profound and more conducive to a stable peace than any other single object of our foreign policy.[61]

Spain

The Spanish Civil War, which had started in 1936, was very much at the centre of the stage in

1937. As the fortunes of war ebbed and flowed, the Spanish situation continually filled the headlines. In one sense, the German situation was relegated to a secondary place in people's minds. In another, it was seen by the Left as being part of the same problem. Italian and German intervention produced some spin-offs in the international field, and the 'Bolshevik threat' in Spain did turn a number of people towards Germany.

It is easy for us, with hindsight, to see the Spanish Civil War as a purely local drama with little in the way of international implications. For many contemporaries, however, it represented the battle-ground of two kinds of political outlook – victory for one's enemies would mean the victory of 'Fascism' or of 'Communism'.

For the Left, and the Right, it was easy to see the other side as being a monolithic entity, on both the Spanish and the European level. We have already seen how sections of the British Right saw the whole Republican side as some kind of 'Bolshevik conspiracy'. For the Left, the Nationalists were all part of the onward march of Fascism in Europe. The reality was much more complicated, and the supporters of both sides exhibited a wide variety of positive views, as opposed to their simple negative hatreds.

One thing that becomes particularly clear, when one examines the British people who were pro-Franco, is that there is no necessary correlation between this and pro-Nazism. There were a good number of people, of course, who combined both enthusiasms, but an equally large number of people who saw no reason to do so. Where there was some kind of correlation was between pro-Franco and pro-Mussolini attitudes. The number of people who combined these was considerable, for a number of reasons.

Firstly, as we have seen, there was no necessary relationship between pro-Fascism and pro-Nazism. Many British people were enthusiastic about Mussolini, while in no way developing favourable attitudes towards Germany. One of the reasons for this may have been the continuing anti-Germanism carried over from the First World War. Above all, however, there was a tendency for the strong support for Italy among England's Catholics to be withheld from 'pagan' Germany.

In 1937 one of the strongest claims to be made about the Spanish Civil War was that it was a Christian crusade against the anti-Christian excesses of the Republicans. In France, Claudel and others acclaimed it as such, and there was a widespread Catholic commitment to the Nationalist side. In Great Britain the same reaction took place, with a strong Catholic lead being given, but with many other Christians following close behind.

As Douglas Jerrold put it, those volunteers who had gone to fight on the Republican side were fighting in 'a cause repugnant to the consciences not only of the whole Catholic population of the Empire, but, as I believe, to the great majority of English Christians of all denominations'.[62] Father Francis Woodlock, SJ, Sir Charles Petrie, Arnold Lunn, and other Catholics, all took the same line. In this they were supported by many other Christians, including Dean Inge. Sir Henry Page Croft, MP, who referred to Franco as 'a gallant Christian gentleman',[63] drew attention to 'the widespread and almost complete destruction of churches, the massacre of priests and monks, and the outrageous treatment of nuns'.[64] Victor Cazalet, MP, who described Franco as 'the leader of our cause',[65] stressed 'the destruction of churches, the abolition of Christianity, and the "liquidation" of whole sections of the community'.[66] A. C. Crossley, MP, Conservative Member for Hampstead, believed that the Nationalists were 'standing up for the rights of their religion and the freedom of property'.[67] In late 1937 the United Christian Front, founded by the admittedly eccentric Captain A. H. M. Ramsay, MP, set out to 'prove the real fact, that General Franco was fighting the cause of Christianity against anti-Christ'. Members of the Front included the Earl of Home, Lord Phillimore, Captain J. H. F. McEwen, MP, and other prominent Conservatives.[68]

It was useless for an Anglican committee, under A. S. Duncan-Jones, the Dean of Chichester,

to go out to examine the evidence, and to point out that Republicans appeared to be more anti-clerical (because of the Church's record) than anti-Christian. Their report was received with a howl of abuse, which criticised the one-sidedness of their investigation, which had visited only Republican-held territory; and the Anglican Bishop of Gibraltar, in whose diocese Spain lay, protested not only that he had not been consulted, but also that their report was 'wholly inadequate as an account of the "alleged atrocities" against the Church in Spain'.[69]

It is clear that a large number of Conservative MPs, for this or for other reasons, were pro-Franco. Prominent among the Friends of National Spain were Alfred Denville, Member for Newcastle-on-Tyne, who had already declared on numerous occasions his sympathy for Mussolini's Italy, and who now drew attention to Republican atrocities, including the 'butchery in Barcelona';[70] Alan Lennox-Boyd, MP for Mid-Bedfordshire, who 'could not understand the argument that it was to our interest to stop General Franco winning';[71] Victor Cazalet, who stated 'I … trust and pray that General Franco will win a victory for civilisation over Bolshevism';[72] Robert Grant-Ferris, and Arnold Wilson. Other Tory MPs spoke up on such questions as Franco's desire to restore law and order in Spain (e.g. Patrick Donner in House of Commons, 6 May 1937), Republican slaughter of civilians (e.g. Edward Keeling in *The Times*, 2 Jan 1937), or Franco's humane attitude towards the civilian population (Sir Alfred Knox, in House of Commons, 6 May 1937). In many of these MPs it was the fear of a Communist takeover in Spain which was the overriding concern. Chips Channon, who declared in his local constituency newspaper that he was 'very pro-Franco, and I hope that he wins',[73] felt privately that 'it will be a disaster for Conservatism if he is defeated by the forces of Communism and anarchy, which dominate the Madrid government'.[74] At a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee on 15 July, Harold Nicolson noted that 'the enormous majority are passionately anti-Government and pro-Franco'. The discussion was 'very useful as it enables a lot of the younger Tories to blow off steam'.[75] Cowling assesses that 'most Conservative MPs sympathised with Franco from the start', and 'did not regard Franco as a Fascist or his rebellion as a Fascist revolution'.[76]

That this had little necessary relation to pro-Germanism was shown by Churchill's initial pro-Franco sympathies. Of the many prominent people who supported Franco, it is true to say that a number also showed pro-German tendencies: for example, Lord Redesdale (who believed that Franco was 'leading a crusade' for all the British held dear),[77] Sir Alfred Knox, and Chips Channon. Others were to reveal themselves as increasingly pro-German over the next couple of years: *e.g.* Francis Yeats-Brown (who spoke of Nationalist Spain's 'lofty enthusiasm, self-sacrifice, and sanctity'),[78] George Pitt-Rivers and Captain Ramsay. Sir Arnold Wilson's muddled attitudes at this stage, and his universal capacity for 'finding the best' in any movement, are best summed up by the description by Kingsmill and Muggeridge, in their comic survey *1938 – A Preview of Next Year's News:* 'Interviewed yesterday, Sir Arnold Wilson, Conservative Member for Hitchin, said: "Socialism, Fascism, National Socialism, Liberalism, Conservatism, Distributism, Republicanism, Monarchism, Democracy, Autocracy, and even Communism, if purged of its militant atheism – all are capable of being used to promote the establishment of God's kingdom on earth."[79]

Many were not, however, really concerned with Germany. Among the Catholics Lunn, Petrie, Grant-Ferris, Woodlock, etc., either did not declare themselves on German affairs, or were even in some cases anti-Nazi. The same went for other pro-Mussolinians, like Denville. A man like Captain McEwen could combine support for Franco with attacks on Hitler's insincerity.[80] In the same way the pro-Franco writer Major Geoffrey McNeill-Moss, who in 1937, as well as writing often to the papers on Spanish questions, produced the books *The Epic of the Alcazar* and *The Legend of Badajoz,* was also later to write a book entitled *Standing Up to Hitler* (1939), which

stressed the threat from Germany.

Attitudes to Spain, therefore, give us very little insight into attitudes to Germany, except in the case of the anti-Fascist attitudes of the Left. On the Right, the Spanish Civil War impinged on Anglo-German affairs to the extent that the question of intervention became one more item on the international agenda and that the Bolshevist threat appeared, to some, to need Germany as its champion. Not everyone on the Right, however, saw the connexion.

Attitudes to Germany

The Press's attitudes to Hitler's 30 January Reichstag speech had been strangely mixed; comment was on the whole reticent, and varied between the belief that Hitler was now 'mouthing the right platitudes', to the feeling that the speech was 'mainly negative', or left Britain 'as we were'.[81] There was enthusiasm in some quarters, of course (particularly in the *Manchester Guardian* and, predictably, in the *Daily Mail*) but the general impression in the press was one of mistrust.

A considerable section of public opinion, however, seemed far more inclined to take Hitler's words at their face value. As Philip Gibbs put it, when Hitler had offered peace at the time of the Rhineland coup, 'to the man-in-the-street and the third-class railway carriage in England … it seemed a pretty good offer … Instead of testing the sincerity of Hitler by accepting the principles of this peace proposal … the German envoy, Herr von Ribbentrop, was put in the dock by the Council of the League.' Anthony Eden's Questionnaire to Germany had been 'unfortunate in its tone'.[82] Now Hitler had once more addressed the world. 'He made a promise which, if believed – and it was not believed – would relieve the fear of his neighbours, and remove the dark shadow which lies heavily over Europe … Was he lying? I do not believe that … I am convinced that he spoke with sincerity.' Yet, on the evening of the speech, 'Our BBC was very quick to give a comment dictated, surely, by some member of the Government or the Foreign Office. It was critical, contemptuous and hostile intone.'[83]

This feeling was strong throughout the year. As John Baker White put it, it was untruthful reports by British correspondents which caused British misunderstanding of Germany. 'This kind of false statement, especially when accompanied by malicious cartoons, only serves to prevent two great nations understanding one another a little better … Be this said for the German people. They are making greater efforts to understand us than we are to understand them.'[84]

Amid the vast number of critical attacks made on the British press this year, one of the most interesting was the one made by a journalist, George Christ, after a visit to the Nuremberg Rally. 'If more people came from England to visit Germany', he wrote, 'and see for themselves what Hitler has accomplished, and is accomplishing, there would be less misunderstanding. I am conscious of the responsibility which rests on me as a journalist in dissipating the misunderstandings which exist between our countries. I have in the past, partly through ignorance, written at times things which were inaccurate and untrue. From now on I intend to write what I believe to be the truth.'[85]

Even an anti-Nazi like Sir Charles Petrie was shocked that 'as soon as Herr Hitler exercises his authority on the side of moderation he is not believed'. He criticised the 'propaganda of the most unscrupulous type' that 'has for so long made the present generation its own, not least in the so-called democratic countries', and which created the situation where 'a dictator cannot make any utterance without numbers of people taking it for granted that he must be a liar'.[86] P. A. Molteno, in a letter to *The Times*, listed all the offers of peace that Hitler had made in the past four years, and concluded that there had been 'a number of opportunities open to British diplomacy for forwarding the conclusion of real peace in Europe, and the restriction of the mad race in

armaments'. He added that we were 'without information why, with the exception of the Naval agreement, no advantage has apparently been taken of these opportunities'.[87] Molteno's letter led to a considerable correspondence in May and June 1937,[88] in which (with the exception of the ubiquitous Admiral Sir Barry Domvile) none of those who took the same line as himself had been particularly conspicuous in pro-German circles up to this time. The main points were that Germany had suffered a Communist threat, which could only have been checked by a dictatorship, and that Germany was 'sincere in her desire for friendship with this country'. Given that Germany had saved us from the evil of Communism, we should 'at least be tolerant of methods that are different from ours and be willing to be friends'.[89]

It is true to say that, in 1937, the 1936 honeymoon had every occasion to continue. Germany was not being directly belligerent towards Great Britain; her participation in the Spanish Civil War could be interpreted as 'none of our business'; Ribbentrop's unfortunate statements could be attributed to him rather than to the Nazi leadership, and Hitler's moderate statements could be taken at their face value; on the Jewish question there was still an impression that the policy had moderated; only the Church question remained, and, as we have seen, it was mainly in Church circles that it had its effect in this country.

Visitors to Germany

As in 1936, visitors to Germany wrote of their favourable impressions, and discounted any talk of excesses. 'In Frankfurt I found the synagogue extremely well kept with every indication of being in current use', wrote Francis Lewcock, the editor of *Branch Banking*. 'I am afraid my German was not equal to coping with the old caretaker, who spoke what appeared to be a mixture of German with a local dialect plus Yiddish, but the old boy seemed to be very comfortable as far as I could gather.'[90] Councillor T. Roberts, of Fleetwood, writing in the *Blackpool Gazette*, said that 'There was no trace of the oppression and suppression of individuality one had heard of … I was amazed throughout my wan derings in Germany by the apparent prosperity and contentedness of the people.'[91] Other visitors stressed the importance of friendly relations between the citizens of the two countries: the captain of the Pembroke College, Cambridge, Association Football team, wrote to *The Times* to describe the impressions his team had gathered when on tour in Germany. They wished 'to testify in the fullest manner possible to the genuine welcome and unstinting hospitality we received'. There had been a 'feeling of mutual comradeship', and they sincerely hoped that other Colleges would follow their example. 'It is in this way that they can discover for themselves the very real feeling that exists for England.'[92] There were, of course, also the wild enthusiasts like Norman Hillson, whose book *I Speak of Germany* (1937) was an untrammelled paean of praise for the Nazi régime. Unlike so many other visitors, Hillson appears to have been aware of German internal repression, but basically to have ignored it. On his visit to Frankfurt, he noted: 'In other days Jews were always prominent in the streets of the banking city but on this occasion I saw none … They seem to have disappeared from the city. It was pleasant to revisit the birthplace of Goethe.'[93]

It is interesting to note, in view of the fact that so much of the general turning towards Germany, in 1936 and 1937, had been Conservative in nature, that the Nazi régime still appeared to many to be an expression of the ideals of Socialism. E. Wait, writing in *The Plebs* in January 1937, declared that what impressed him most about the Nazi attitude was 'its strong equalitarian and socially levelling element', and called it 'a democracy in personal social relationships, as distinct from a democracy in political rights'.[94] John Baker White declared that 'In Germany to-day full-blooded Socialism is in practice so far as the administration of industry and labour is

concerned.'[95] George Christ, who in England had 'strong sympathy with the Socialist Party because I want to see an improvement in the lot of the working people', believed that 'in Germany Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party have done more in four years to improve the condition of the mass of the people than their socialist predecessors did'.[96] Frank Clarke, MP, believed that Hitler had behind him 'the wholehearted devotion of the working classes in Germany', and that 'the 25 per cent not completely captivated includes a good number of what in England may be described as the upper classes in education and financial wealth'. He noted 'the obedient affection of the working classes towards the Führer', and 'the dignity of the German workmen'. Clarke had been to Germany with a Roads Delegation, and noted the extraordinary success of German road construction, which had obviously been helped by the 'complete subordination to the Führer', which had enabled him to apply 'the ruthlessness of wartime necessities' to peacetime road construction, avoiding, for example, any land-acquisition trouble. 'That', sighed Clarke, 'is something incapable of reproduction in Britain.'97

A number of prominent people visited Germany during the year. Lord Londonderry was a guest of Goering's (together with Mussolini) towards the end of the year.[98] Many people attended the Nuremberg Rally in September, and were impressed. Lady Snowden,[99] for example, wrote: 'This is the most impressive thing I have ever seen in all my experience. Whoever in England treats it with discourtesy and disrespect is guilty of very grave folly.'[100] William Teeling,[101] while recognising that 'to the minds of many of the foreign guests present the attack on recognised religion is the most serious thing in Germany to-day', nevertheless felt that the foreign guests, who had been 'entertained with a genuine friendliness … could agree with the complaints of their hosts that it is a thousand pities the foreign Press pinprick so frequently the German government'. The final lesson of Nuremberg was, in his view, that the Germans were anxious for peace with Great Britain, and that 'more efforts should be made in this country to bring about an understanding of Germany which would insure that peace'. The Germans should be treated as European equals, 'and not as naughty schoolboys, always to be lectured'.[102] John Baker White observed that certain members of the British party were far more anti-Semitic than the Germans he met, and that he 'found no evidence of bitter anti-Jewish feeling amongst the ordinary people and no support among the mass of the Nazi party for, Streicher's campaign'.[103] Whether one regarded Hitler as a power for good or evil, one was faced with the inescapable fact that 'in a little over four years he has brought a great nation out of the depths and given it back its soul. He has done more, he has given it that precious thing, self-confidence, and hope in the future'.104 Though there was much about National Socialism that White heartily disliked,[105] he believed Hitler to be a 'very great man', with 'very great ability, courage and perseverance'.[106] He had done marvels for the German people through the basic doctrine of National Socialism, which was 'very similar to the beliefs of the Social-Democrat and even of the less extreme Communist'.[107]

Of the visitors to Germany during the year, there are three of particular interest: Lansbury, Lothian, and the Duke of Windsor.

George Lansbury, the former Leader of the Labour Party, visited Hitler on 19 April. He was a well-meaning, Christian man, who was indefatigable in the cause of peace, and who tended to see sparks of good in everyone. Baldwin, who had for so long avoided meeting Hitler, declared privately that he 'envied Lansbury the faith which enabled him to go and tackle Hitler'.[108] Others were less kind. Kingsmill and Muggeridge, in their spoof volume *1938 – A preview of Next Year's News*, concocted an imaginary news item which ran: 'After an interview yesterday in his Long Island home with 'Migs' Carlo, American ace killer, Mr George Lansbury said: "I think this talk has cleared the air. There is a long way to go, but Mr Carlo and I found ourselves in substantial agreement on a number of topics".' There then followed further imaginary Lansbury interviews

with white-slave traffickers, cannibals, *etc.*[109]

It is interesting to note that the *Evening News* described Hitler and Lansbury as 'the two sincerest men in European public life to-day'. The *Anglo-German Review* referred to Hitler's 'deep sincerity and straightforwardness', and stated that both men were 'determined to do everything that may lie in their powers to bring real peace and friendliness into this troubled world'.[110] However, as Gannon points out, 'Many of the papers obviously refused to take Lansbury seriously and found it impossible to believe that Hitler would either.'[111]

Lothian's visit was a very different matter. Whatever the actual position in Great Britain, the Nazis believed him to be of influence. By the middle of April 1937, Lothian had decided that it would be important for him to visit Hitler again.[112] Fortuitously, or opportunely, a letter from Lord Allen of Hurtwood to *The Times* on 19 April stressed the great need for negotiation with Germany. Lothian had his interview with Hitler, and another with Goering, on 4 May; the next day he saw Dr Schacht. He returned convinced that, though it was 'a dangerous position in which we all stand today', it was 'possible to escape' from that position.[113] The situation was 'both more dangerous and more soluble' than he had thought. Germany's demands were not unreasonable, and there were possibilities for a settlement in Eastern Europe, with an *Anschluss* of Austria and Germany, and with special rights for German minorities in Poland and Czechoslovakia. Some colonial distribution should also be possible.[114]

As well as writing articles and making speeches on these lines, Lothian submitted a memorandum to the Foreign Office, and also circulated it to Dominion Prime Ministers at the Imperial Conference. The senior Foreign Office officials 'all pointed out Lothian's naïveté in assuming that concessions broadside in Eastern Europe would check German ambitions *tout court* or that they could be made without serious repercussions in France and Russia'.[115] Once again, as in 1936, Lothian's interventions were basically ignored by those concerned with Britain's foreign policy.

The Duke of Windsor's visit to Germany was something of a farce. The whole thing was planned, and brought about, by a new friend in whom, with his usual lack of judgment, the Duke appeared to trust implicitly.

The first time he had met Charles Bedaux had been at the Château de Candé, owned by Bedaux, where the Windsor wedding took place on 3 June. As Frances Donaldson puts it, 'Neither the ex-King of England, nor his future wife, nor any of their advisers apparently saw any reason why the loan of this house for their wedding should not be accepted from a man they had never met and about whom only the most cursory enquiries had been made.'[116] Bedaux was a naturalised American of French origin, who had built up a large fortune on the basis of a fantastic 'efficiency system' which, described by the American trades unions as 'completely exhausting, inhuman',[117] is believed to have been the basis for Chaplin's satire in *Modern Times*. Bedaux had had problems in Germany since 1933; his companies there had been suspended by the Nazis in 1933, and it took years of intrigue for him finally, in July 1937, to be given an interview with Dr Schacht, in which it was agreed that, for various payments totalling 50,000 dollars, he would be allowed to open up again, provided he worked in collaboration with Dr Ley, head of the German Labour Front, and gave him part of his profits.[118]

It is interesting that this breakthrough, for Bedaux, took place one month after he had been the Duke of Windsor's host. It is possible that, on this same occasion, the project of a visit to Germany by the Duke of Windsor may have been discussed. Whatever the sequence of events, the Duke, who meanwhile had been Bedaux's guest at his castle of Borsodivanka in Hungary, delivered the following communiqué to the press on September 3:

His Royal Highness makes it known that he and the Duchess of Windsor are visiting Germany and

the United States in the near future for the purpose of studying housing and working conditions in these two countries.[119]

This concern with 'housing and working conditions' was no doubt designed to continue the myth of the King who had cared for his working people. It was only the more discerning who were aware of the extent to which Bedaux's interests lay in the same quarter, but with somewhat different attitudes involved. Be that as it may, the Duke's visit was clearly of some political importance, and attempts were made to dissuade him from it. It is possible that it was undertaken through naïveté; but surely even the Duke must have realised that, in 1937, a visit by the ex-King to Nazi Germany was in itself a political action.

The visit began on 11 October, and everything was conducted in a blaze of publicity. The Windsors, under Ley's aegis, met Goering, Hess, Himmler, and Goebbels, as well as having an extended interview with Hitler. They also, of course, visited youth camps and the houses of German workers. The Press followed them everywhere, and huge crowds acclaimed them. 'The Duke', writes Frances Donaldson, 'responded with what the reporter to the *New York Times* described as a modified Nazi salute – something between the real thing and a wave. On two occasions, however, he was reported as giving the full Hitler salute – the first time at a training school in Pomerania when a guard of honour from the Death's Head Division of the Hitler Elite Guards was drawn up for his inspection, the second time for Hitler himself.'[120]

There is no doubt that the Nazis felt that, in some way, the Duke still had some possibility of power. Bruce Lockhart, after a long conversation with Bernstorff of the German Embassy, described to Foreign Office friends the 'German view of Edward, Duke of Windsor', saying that the 'Germans still believe he will come back as social-equalising King, will inaugurate English form of Fascism and alliance with Germany'.[121] German undercover activities in 1940, when the Duke was in Portugal, show the continuing belief at that date in such a possibility. The Germans certainly saw Edward as a man who, if he had remained King, would have ensured friendship between Britain and Germany. As for his visit, at the very least it would cause considerable embarrassment to the British Government, and good publicity for Germany's social policies, which, in the opinion of so many, compared very favourably with Britain's shortcomings in that area.

British reaction to the visit was mixed, with very strong opposition in some quarters; but even those who were in favour of an Anglo-German *rapprochement* were aware of the unseemly nature of such political activity by the ex-King so soon in his successor's reign. American reactions were much more violent, partly because of the very much greater coverage given to the visit by the American press (the British press had been very muted), but partly because of American views about Bedaux, the Windsors' friend.

As Abraham Flexner put it, in a letter to Tom Jones: 'The poor fellow [The Duke of Windsor] must have very little discretion and must be very badly advised. His going to Germany and hobnobbing with Hitler and Ley just before visiting America was enough to outrage every liberal organisation in this country, and his guide in this country [Bedaux] could not have been more poorly chosen.'[122] In the event, faced by opposition from the American labour unions, who saw Bedaux as something approaching the devil incarnate, the Windsors called off their American visit. 'He was well advised to call off his visit here', wrote Flexner, 'for the purpose announced was a silly one anyway. He has no equipment which would enable him to study housing and working conditions, and the working people in this country do not like to be made into a circus … Had the Windsors come over here quietly and unostentatiously they would have been respectfully received. As it is, there is no telling what might have happened had the visit been carried out.'[123]

The only winner, from the German visit, was Bedaux, who from then on worked closely with

the Nazis. He was also the loser, however. In the short term, his treatment in the United States shattered him, and he gave up all his American interests, leaving the USA for ever. In the long term, the events of 1937 led to his arrest in North Africa where, until the Allied landings in November 1942, he had been 'attached to the German Military Occupation High Command'. As a citizen of the United States, he was committed for trial on a treason charge, but committed suicide in his cell.[124]

The Anglo-German Review, and the Link

The *Anglo-German Review* was extremely popular in the first six months of its existence, so much so that it could reduce its price, in June 1937, from a shilling to sixpence.[125] Its readership eventually settled down at about 12,000, where it was to remain until early 1939.[126] This is particularly interesting in that a considerable change occurred in the journal's attitudes in mid-1937.

Up till that time it had, of course, been pro-Nazi, but had played above all the ex-service card, stressing comradeship and the need for togetherness. Occasionally, eminent figures had expressed their faith in Hitler. Lady Londonderry, who had visited Hitler with her husband twice in 1936, wrote in the number for February 1937, describing Hitler as 'symbolic of the new Germany, of which he is the principal creator', and a 'born leader … an arresting personality … a man who possessed the greatness to be perfectly simple'. She was convinced that he stood for peace, and for friendship with the English. He had saved Germany from Communism, and 'may well be called upon to save Europe'.[127]

At this early stage of the *Review,* however, when it came to Germany's internal policies the tone was one of an attempt to play them down, rather than of a positive justification for them. A dangerous hint of what was to come, however, was to be found in the April number, where the editor, C. E. Carroll, writing, as so many others were doing, against the British press's attitude to Germany, specifically laid the blame for this (in a manner familiar to us from the 1933–5 period), on 'the Jewish element in the British Press'. The resentment of British Jews at the treatment of the Jews in Germany was, he said, legitimate if it was expressed in the proper place. 'But it is not legitimate to use the Press as a platform for anti-German scare stories and vicious propaganda, which can have no other effect than to create tension between the two countries. The Jewish element in the British Press is very powerful … There are many Jews connected with the British Press who are allowing their private and racial feelings to override all other considerations … That is an unwise and dangerous attitude, for which Jewish interests in Great Britain – as well as, incidentally, the Jews in Germany – are likely, in the long run, to be more hurt than helped. No country can allow a small minority, actuated solely by their own considerations, to stir up trouble with a neighbouring friendly power.'[128]

From June onwards, an anti-Semitic note became fairly constant in the *Anglo-German Review.* Often this was in the letter columns, giving us an impression of the nature of part, at least, of the readership. Its inclusion, however, shows us something of the nature of the editorship as well.

The June number contained several letters endorsing Carroll's views on the Jews and the press, and this trend continued. Typical was a letter in the September issue from C. Duvivier: 'As you yourself revealed in a previous number of the *Review,* the Jewish element in the British Press is very powerful, and there are not many of us who would deny that it is the Press, chief instrument for influencing public opinion as it is, that is doing all the harm to-day.'[129] Duvivier was one of the inveterate letter-writers who were now being attracted to the Review. In 1936 he had written to the *Saturday Review* that 'the Government should at once wash its hands of the Bolshevik

intrigues at Geneva', and that Englishmen would 'fight in defence of our own homes and Empire, but we have *no desire* to fight for every Hottentot under the sun as seem to be the wishes of dandy Eden and Co.'[130] He was to write several letters to the *Anglo-German Review* over the next couple of years, praising Mosley's attitude at the time of Munich,[131] approving Carroll's view of the 1938 pogrom,[132] and recommending to all readers Nesta Webster's *Germany and England*.[133]

Another typical series of attitudes were expressed in a letter from James Gonord, in the September 1937 number. In it he described the way in which, before the rise of Hitler, 'The Jews had a most tremendous influence over the entire country, financially, economically and morally.' A Jewish correspondent had spoken of toleration and freedom. 'Did Christ tolerate the Jewish moneylenders in the synagogue? Are we to tolerate evil, vice, hunger and misery? In the circumstances that Germany found herself, "toleration" would have been criminal. When one knows all the facts, one realises that, if anything, Hitler has erred on the side of "toleration" in regard to the Jewish problem in his country!'[134]

In July a new group for Anglo-German friendship was founded, which was closely identified with the *Anglo-German Review.* This was the Link, founded by Admiral Sir Barry Domvile. It has been generally accepted that the Link was more openly pro-Nazi than the Anglo-German Fellowship. Tennant, in his memoirs, stressed this, suggesting that the Anglo-German Fellowship, which had been attacked as having been a Nazi organisation, was 'nothing of the sort'. The Nazis, he claimed, 'who possibly expected support from us, were soon disappointed and they encouraged the start of another organisation – "the Link" – which proved more willing to cooperate with them'.[135]

This is basically nonsense. We have already seen the use which the Germans had made, and were continuing to make, of the Anglo-German Fellowship. They certainly laid value on it, specifically because it had a veneer of respectability, and laid the way open into circles of power and importance. The Link was more openly pro-Nazi; and far less respectable. Its clientele were mainly ordinary people in ordinary towns, who had little influence. While any attempt at fostering pro-Nazi views must have seemed good, it is very unlikely that the Germans saw the Link as half so valuable as the Anglo-German Fellowship.

Domvile states the difference between the two movements far more clearly. 'I and several friends who held similar views', he wrote, 'felt that an urgent need existed for the establishment of an Association to foster the mutual knowledge and understanding that ought to exist between the British and German peoples, and to counteract the flood of lies with which our people were being regaled in their daily papers … There was in existence already an Anglo-German Fellowship, of which I was a member of the Council. I was never very happy about this Association, which catered mainly for the well-to-do, and was largely supported by big business firms, interested in clearing the ground for an extension of commercial relations … Membership of the "Link" was open to all.'[136]

As we shall see later, when we look at the Link at its height of success, Domvile's description was true. Branches all over the country gathered in people from all classes and occupations, very few of them being of power or importance.

By the end of the year four branches had been formed, in Chelsea, Southend-on-Sea, West London and Birmingham. Though Domvile stressed, in public statements, that 'the Link has no polities', and that it was 'anti-nobody and anti-nothing',[137] his opening speech to the Southend branch on 4 November showed his attitudes within the group. He deplored (to general approval from the audience) the distorted reports in the press, and went on to describe the dispirited condition of pre-Hitler Germany, and the way in which the Germans had 'found their salvation in Adolf Hitler'. He 'knew Hitler personally, and was at the party meeting in Nuremberg both this

year and the year before, and if any of those present went there they would realise what he had done for Germany. It might not be a system of government which suited this country, but it suited Germany were well.'[138]

The Birmingham branch went further at its opening meeting on 2 December. Professor Sir Raymond Beazley declared that the British were 'specially called upon to have friendly relations' with Germany. 'They are closely related to the Anglo-Saxon stock', he said. 'They represent, when all exaggeration is put aside, the finest, most virile and valuable stocks on the Continent.' Of Hitler he commented: 'With such a man, and with such a force as Germany … we cannot maintain our unresponsive attitude.'[139]

The Link was to achieve its great popularity in 1938 and 1939, and it will perhaps be best to assess its significance at that stage. In 1937 it was a new venture, but the strong response it received in the areas which it had chosen for its first branches was of some importance.

In comparison with a broadly-based movement like the Link, another new political group which came into existence in 1937 was of little real significance, but is worth a mention. The National Socialist League was founded by William Joyce and John Beckett, who had been sacked by Mosley from their official positions in the BUF. With them they took John McNab and Vincent Collier. The new movement, which had at most 300 members, was of course violently anti-Mosley, who 'retains a schoolboy choir for the express purpose of chanting, and chalking, "Fascism next time" at increasingly remote intervals'.[140] The two leaders, wrote Beckett, did 'not set up as people to be saluted and "hailed" on every possible, and impossible, occasion', but merely came forward as 'instruments of a great policy'.[141] This policy included anti-Semitism, as Joyce's earlier career would have led one to guess. It was, however, much more radical than Mosley's doctrine had become, and Joyce and Beckett saw themselves as answering 'the revolutionary yearning of the people to cast off gross, sordid, democratic materialism without having to put on the shackles of Marxian materialism, which would be identical with the chains cast off'.[142] They stressed the British nature of their enterprise, and, in another sideswipe at Mosley, declared that 'Communism and imitative Fascism have served to show the futility of attempting to buy the support of British people with foreign gold', in that even a propaganda expenditure of £3,000 a year had 'failed to gain support for heel-clicking and petty militarism'.[143] British as their movement was to be, arising 'from soil and people', Joyce and Beckett had great admiration for Hitler, and for his 'gallant achievement against international Jewish finance'.[144] Friendship with Germany was essential, and 'if Germany needs help in hurling Orientals back to the Orient, she is entitled to receive it from those who prefer white manhood and government to any other'.[145] The National Socialist League was merely another of the fringe extremist groups which bedevilled the thirties; the future commitments of some of its members will, however, be of interest to us.

Political Circles

In general, there was a considerable section of British public opinion which wished for friendship with Germany, and which believed in the possibility of it. In political circles, there were further reasons for this desire. There was a strong feeling that in the European situation one had to be friendly with either Germany or Italy. As Bruce Lockhart put it in March, 'We cannot afford to be anti-Italian and anti-German at the same time.'[146] His own view was that Britain should become more friendly with Italy. This view was shared by his friend Rex Leeper and a considerable group within the Foreign Office. But, as Leeper pointed out in May, 'We were now face to face with new wave of pro-Germanism, idea being pal up with Germany and then put Italy in her place.'[147] Such

ideas were no doubt exacerbated by Italy's beastliness in Ethiopia, where her 'murderous reprisals' in Addis Ababa moved even Sir Ernest Bennett to anger; Bennett praised the Archbishop of Canterbury for protesting, and contrasted this with Italy, where 'the Church of Christ looks on in silence'.[148] News of the Moscow trials gave yet further reasons to see Germany, the 'defender against Bolshevism', as the better ally to choose. Sir George Shee was not the only person to praise 'the great bulwark against Bolshevism which Germany presents', and to see 'our particular task' as to 'settle with Germany'.[149]

Within the Conservative Party there was a particularly strong feeling in favour of approaching Germany rather than Italy, and it is not surprising that this feeling should have been translated into action by the new Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, and by the new British Ambassador in Berlin, Sir Nevile Henderson.

For a long time those who wished for friendship with Germany had been convinced that the British Ambassador in Berlin, Phipps, had 'no telephone line' to Hitler, who despised him. Tom Jones, who had been pressing for a change for some time, urged Prime Minister Baldwin, on 15 January, that 'someone bigger than Phipps, *e.g.* Willingdon or Halifax, should be planted in Berlin for a few months'.[150] On 2 February, Phipps was appointed to Paris and Sir Nevile Henderson was appointed to replace him.

Though Henderson had been approved by Eden and Vansittart, who 'could find no one in the Service better',[151] Oliver Harvey was perhaps prescient when he wrote in his diary, 'I hope we are not sending another Ribbentrop to Berlin.'[152] Before he set off to Germany on 29 April, Henderson had an interview with Neville Chamberlain, who, though he was still Chancellor of the Exchequer, was already, preparatory to taking over the Premiership, taking a strong interest in foreign affairs. Chamberlain urged him to 'take the line of cooperation with Germany, if possible. N.C. felt it was not the business of this country to interfere with forms of government which other countries chose to have'.[153] Henderson saw his new assignment as a 'mission', and was 'fully alive to the probability that the attempts which I intended to make to work with the Nazis and to understand their point of view, would be criticised by many people in my own country'. Before leaving Chamberlain, he asked him 'whether, as Prime Minister, he would object to my being, if I thought it necessary, slightly indiscreet on first arrival in Berlin'. Chamberlain replied 'that a calculated indiscretion was sometimes a very useful form of diplomacy'.[154]

On 28 May, Neville Chamberlain took over as Prime Minister, and on 1 June Henderson committed his 'calculated indiscretion'. He had been invited, as guest of honour, to a dinner of the Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft (whose President, the Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, had been an Eton contemporary of his). In his speech he referred to the 'entirely erroneous conception' that people in England had of the Nazi régime; 'Otherwise they would lay less stress on Nazi dictatorship and much more emphasis on the great social experiment which is being tried out in this country. Not only would they criticise less, but they might learn some useful lessons. It is regrettable to see how much concentration is applied to some trees which appear misshapen in English eyes and how little appreciation there is of the great forest as a whole.'

Henderson went on to say that the Germans had some misconceptions about the English, too. They constantly repeated that Great Britain was attempting to hem Germany in on every side. 'I can assure you', he said, 'that Great Britain is making no such attempt and has no desire to make it. We fully appreciate Germany's great mission in the world. German culture, German philosophy and German ideals are among the noblest in the world.' There was no question between Germany and England which could not be solved 'by peaceful good will and mutual cooperation.'[155]

This speech, as Henderson had expected, provoked an uproar. Some British journals referred to him as 'our Nazi ambassador at Berlin'.[156] What is interesting, however, is the extent to which his

views were also supported. Henderson saw himself as having given ‘offence to the Left Wing’, and it certainly appears to have been mainly on the Right that he found his defenders. In the House of Commons, predictably, Sir Alfred Knox asked for congratulations to be conveyed ‘to HM Ambassador in Berlin on having made a real contribution to the cause of peace’.[157] Mr Macquisten so riled the Opposition that he was continuously interrupted. Duncan Sandys spoke of ‘the satisfaction that is widely held at the signs of improved Anglo-German relations, of which the Ambassador spoke’.[158] Victor Cazalet asked whether it was not ‘the duty of His Majesty’s representatives in all countries to establish and maintain the most friendly relations possible with the countries to which they are accredited’.[159] It was, as these names will have shown, not just the usual pro-Germanists who approved. The Bishop of Chelmsford,[160] for example, said: ‘I am perfectly certain that it is only an insignificant minority of our people who do not long for friendship and goodwill between ourselves and the German people, and I can truthfully say, I do not number among my friends any person who does not regard with horror and dismay the possibility of any serious misunderstanding between ourselves and the Germans. The whole world lies under a great debt to the German people; it is quite true to say that their achievements are regarded with admiration in this country.’[161]

Even before this speech Henderson had composed a memorandum for the Foreign Office, in which he had pressed for an understanding with Germany, based on giving her opportunities in the East. Eastern Europe was not ‘a vital British interest’, and the German was ‘certainly more civilised than the Slav, and in the end, if properly handled, also less potentially dangerous to British interests’.[162] The Foreign Office, naturally enough given their actual policies, shot down such views, in the same way that they had dismissed Lothian’s; but Henderson was not just an eccentric individual, as has been suggested; he stands as one example of a whole trend in British thought at the time.

It is clear that, as 1937 progressed, and as ‘the truculent and aggressive attitude of Italy in the Mediterranean’[163] was reported to the Cabinet, Chamberlain’s view that better relations should be cultivated with Germany was confirmed. A Cabinet minute of 7 July shows that the Cabinet agreed with his proposal ‘that the best way of countering the disquieting attitude of the Italian Government was to cultivate better relations with the German Government’.[164] This feeling was an accurate reflection of the mood of a large number of people in political circles. There was, as Rex Leeper noted in October, ‘quite a strong pro-German feeling among certain Conservatives’, while others, especially Chamberlain, were ‘surrenderers, and in any case are terrified of Bolshevism’.[165] There were other reasons, it seemed, for feeling ‘terrified’. In late 1937 people were becoming more and more aware of the scale of German rearmament. At an Adult Education Conference in Cambridge in September, consisting chiefly of ‘L.E.A. aldermen, and directors, and tutors’, Tom Jones noted that there was ‘under all a feeling of anxiety and depression at the European situation. The German war preparations are on such a gigantic scale that it is no wonder there is nervousness and hesitation.’[166] In mid-November Harold Nicolson noted that ‘Tory opinion is almost entirely on the run and would willingly let Germany take Russia and over-run the Near East so long as she leaves us alone’.[167] To the natural pro-German feelings of a whole section of the community had now been added the desire for ‘appeasement’ on the part of many who felt no basic sympathy for the Nazi régime, but who believed that this was the most sensible course to take on the stormy sea of power politics.

At the Nuremberg Rally in September, Henderson had been most impressed by Goering’s complaints at Britain’s lack of friendship, and his remarks on the danger of the German people regarding Britain as an enemy. Following this conversation, Halifax (who, like Henderson and Goering, was a keen huntsman and a good shot) received an invitation, as Master of the Middleton

Hounds, to the International Hunting Exhibition in Berlin. Halifax had, of course, no official connexion with foreign affairs, being Lord President of the Council. The invitation was, however, quite clearly aimed at secret negotiations of some kind, by-passing the Foreign Office. It was yet another example of the kind of meeting which the Nazi leaders had sought unsuccessfully under Baldwin. This time, with Chamberlain in the saddle, the offer was accepted.

Halifax had, it is true, said that he would only go with Eden's consent. Though reluctant, Eden saw no reason to refuse the offer in the form in which it had come, but he was furious when he discovered that it had also been accepted that Halifax should go on from the exhibition to have a 'personal interview' with the Führer at Berchtesgaden. The rift between Chamberlain and Eden, who had so successfully prevented the proposed Baldwin–Hitler meetings, was already in evidence.

The press was on the whole fairly enthusiastic about the visit, though the famous indiscretion by the *Evening Standard,* declaring that an agreement was to be considered whereby, in return for a ten-year truce on the colonial issue, 'Hitler would expect the British Government to leave him a free hand in Central Europe',[168] predictably led to a great deal of unpleasant publicity. According to Voigt, the indiscretion had been actually planted by the Foreign Office, who were desperate … to counteract a dangerous political move.[169] Whatever the reason, the article pulled the carpet from under Halifax's feet, even before he left. It is interesting, however, to note that much of the rest of the quality press spent its time deploring the 'inexcusable indiscretion',[170] and the resultant 'insubstantial speculation',[171] which jeopardised the whole trip.

Halifax's trip has been amply described by other writers. It achieved little; there had, however, been dangerous talk, on Halifax's part, of 'possible alterations in the European order', including Danzig, Austria and Czechoslovakia, though he had stressed that 'England was interested to see that any alterations should come through the course of peaceful evolution.'[172]

Halifax's visit produced an interesting example of the use of the 'Cliveden set' in the mythology of the late thirties. Claud Cockburn, editor of *The Week,* wrote an article giving what he described as 'the true facts and the true background of this extraordinary and somewhat sinister affair'. The *Evening Standard* report as to a proposed bargain had been true, he said. The proposal had not come from Hitler, however. It 'was first got into usable diplomatic shape at a party at the Astors' place at Cliveden on the weekend of October 23rd and 24th … On October 28th *The Times* published its startling editorial on "The Claim to Colonies" – concluding with a pathetic plea for secrecy in any negotiations that might be carried on'.[173] There followed a description of various political and diplomatic intrigues that ensued.

Cockburn had been pursuing the 'Cliveden Set' for some time. By late 1937 it had become an accepted myth not only in Great Britain but abroad. The extent to which Cockburn's methods consisted of guesswork, however, is shown by this Halifax concoction. At the Cliveden house-party on 23–24 October (a typically wide and eclectic gathering) one of the main guests had been Anthony Eden. There was, of course, a lot of political conversation, but we have no evidence of any general knowledge of the Halifax visit (let alone a plot to undertake it), and, indeed, the invitation had been accepted some time before. *The Times'* article on Colonies was, as we have seen, the natural outcome of a month of extensive correspondence, which had been sparked off by Hitler's speech on the colonial question on 3 October.

There is no doubt that a considerable number of 'appeasers' attended the Cliveden house-parties. They were not, however, particularly influential in Government circles. As Gilbert and Gott put it:

Cliveden was responsible for very little. There was much talk, and some of the talkers hoped to influence those in power. Their success, where it existed, was the result of general dispositions

among the mighty rather than of Cliveden's wine. The disposition to appease was widespread. It needed no half-hidden cabalistic social gathering to enforce it. The talk at Cliveden was certainly of appeasement, but it was a sideshow. Were the archives of Cliveden ever on view, they would be more useful to the novelist than to the historian.[174]

The attitudes of the 'Cliveden Set' were common to a fairly wide section of British opinion at the time. They were, nevertheless, a convenient target for their opponents to choose.

By the end of the year, many people connected with foreign affairs were aware that Anglo-German relations were not going as well as they might. Explanations for this were varied, but had as their common factor the belief that it was German attitudes which were causing this. Bernstorff, talking to Bruce Lockhart, ascribed it to Goebbels, who was 'responsible for anti-British policy', and suggested that Goering, who was more favourable, should be brought over to London.[175] Lothian's visit to Hitler in May had been caused by similar concern about the 'deterioration in relations', and his first question was what were 'the causes from the German point of view'.[176] Hitler's stated reasons, at that stage, were Abyssinia, Spain and the colonial question.

Now, it is quite clear that the colonial question, which so bedevilled Anglo-German relations in 1936–7, was a means rather than an end as far as the Germans were concerned. Gilbert and Gott note the extent to which, when in early 1938 positive proposals for colonial restitution were put forward by the British Government, Hitler showed no real interest, and had no precise demands to communicate.[177] Abyssinia, too, can be taken as having been a mere pretext for dissatisfaction, rather than something central to German interests.

Spain, however, is another matter. Here there had been considerable cause for disagreement between the two countries, at Foreign Office level; and the Germans had reacted violently to press criticism of German intervention, and particularly to *The Times'* report of Guernica. On the British side, the accounts of Guernica had caused some concern; but, as we have seen, accounts of atrocities in Spain merely reinforced people in views they already held; those who wished to, believed, and those who did not, discounted. At public opinion level, on the British side at least, such events had made little difference.

The question of German intervention in Spain affected the man in the street very little, except in left-wing circles who were anti-Nazi in any case. It was only in high political circles that it was realised that, as far as foreign relations were concerned, the Spanish imbroglio had impeded the progress of Anglo-German relations. As Lloyd George put it, in a letter to Conwell-Evans in December 1937, 'I had grave misgivings as to the effect which the Spanish situation might have upon our relations with Germany. It is a great misfortune that we did not compose our differences before the Spanish crisis ever arose. It could have been done quite easily at that date.' It was, Lloyd George felt, not Hitler's fault that a friendly agreement was not reached. 'He made us two or three offers which I urged the Government to act upon promptly. The present muddle is entirely due to the hesitancy and the nervelessness of the Baldwin administration. They never saw an opportunity until it was too late to act upon it.' Hitler was now committed, through these British blunders, to Mussolini, who was 'temperamentally an aggressor. I have never thought that Herr Hitler was and I do not believe it now.'[178]

There is little doubt that German attitudes towards Great Britain were hardening by the end of 1937, and that official British attitudes, and press reports, on German intervention in Spain are likely to have been part of the cause of this (though by early 1938 other factors had come into play as well). On the British side, continuing enthusiasm for German friendship was to be found in many circles, and this year saw the growing success of some Anglo-German ventures, such as the Anglo-German Fellowship and the Anglo-German Brotherhood, and the founding of new ones such as the Link.

What was being realised more and more in other circles, however, was the extent of the danger to peace that was being presented by Germany. The events of 1938 were to reinforce this fear.

1 See, e.g., the dinner of the Anglo-German Fellowship on 15 Dec. 1936 (*The Times*, 16 Dec. 1936).
2 Conwell-Evans, letter to *The Times*, 5 March 1937.
3 Lord Cecil, letter to *The Times*, 6 March 1937.
4 See Middlemas, *Diplomacy of Illusion*, p. 175.
5 Gannon, op. cit., p. 106.
6 *The Times*, 1 Feb. 1937.
7 Cantril and Strunk, *Public Opinion 1935–1946*, pp. 274–5: British Institute for Public Opinion, June 1937, poll on the question: 'What foreign nation do you like the best?'
8 Richard Grunberger, *A Social History of the Third Reich*, London, 1971, p. 438.
9 Kurt Zentner, *Illustrierte Geschichte des Dritten Reiches*, Munich, 1965, p. 376.
10 Grunberger, op. cit., p. 440.
11 Zentner, op. cit., p. 376.
12 Grunberger, op. cit., p. 441.
13 Zentner, op. cit., p. 400.
14 See, e.g., *The Times* for 6 April 1937.
15 Bishop of Chichester, letter to *The Times*, 2 Jan 1937.
16 Bishop of Chichester, letter to *The Times*, 27 March 1937.
17 See *Times* letter of 11 March.
18 Bishop of Gloucester, letter to *The Times*, 24 Feb. 1937.
19 *The Times*, 23 June 1937.
20 Leader, *The Times*, 28 Oct. 1937.
21 Sir Arnold Wilson, *More Thoughts and Talks*, p. 32.
22 Tom Jones, *Diary*, entry for 13 Sept. 1936 (p. 261).
23 'Why I believe in Hitler', in *Germany in the Third Reich*, hrsg. von Dr Gustav Schad, Frankfurt, 1936.
24 In 1937, the English Committee of the Brotherhood consisted of: The Revd J. R. Temple, DD (Chairman), the Revd A. J. Macdonald, DD (Vice-Chairman), C. L. Ackroyd (Treasurer), the Revd F. W. Armstrong, the Revd E. A. Davies, the Revd G. E. Hickman Johnson, the Revd J. Fraser, the Revd E. G. Miles, the Revd W. J. Platt, the Revd E. N. Porter Goff, H. Bristol, F. P. Harris, T. P. Conwell-Evans, T. Corder Catchpool, W. R. Hughes, Gwendolen S. Catchpool, Miss Esther Waldegrave (sec.).
25 Tom Jones, *Diary*, entry for 19 October 1936 (p. 276).
26 *Sunday Times*, 28 Feb. 1937.
27 Jacobsen, op. cit., especially p. 10, p. 429.
28 Jacobsen, op. cit., p. 296–7.
29 Jacobsen, op. cit., p. 429–30.
30 Letter from Tom Jones to Lady Grigg, 12 Feb. 1937, (*Diary with Letters*, p. 313).
31 *E.g.* G. L. Steer, *Germany in Africa* (1938), Leo Amery, *The German Colonial Claim* (1939), A. L. C. Bullock, *Germany's Colonial Demands* (1939), B. Bennett, *Hitler over Africa* (1939), G. Roberts, *The Nazi Claim to Colonies* (1939), S. F. Wright, *Should we surrender colonies?* (1939), P. E. Lewin, *The Germans and Africa* (1939), *etc.*
32 Lord Noel-Buxton, 'England and Germany', *Contemporary Review*, January 1938.
33 Lord Astor, letter to *The Times*, 18 October 1937.
34 Lord Astor, letter to *The Times*, 13 October 1937.
35 Former Bishop of Bloemfontein. Chaplain of Eastbourne College, 1936–40, and then Principal of Ely Theological College.
36 Bishop Carey, letter to *The Times*, 13 Oct. 1937.
37 Bishop Carey, letter to *The Times*, 21 Oct. 1937.
38 Rt Revd Arthur Karney, former Bishop of Johannesburg, letter to *The Times*, 26 Oct. 1937.
39 Sir George Shee, letter to *The Times*, 23 Oct. 1937.
40 Sir George Shee, letter to *The Times*, 29 Sept. 1937.
41 Sir Ernest Bennett, letter to *The Times*, 18 Dec. 1936.
42 Lord David Cecil, letter to *The Times*, 14 Dec. 1936.
43 Lord David Cecil, letter to *The Times*, 23 Dec. 1936.
44 Wilson, letter to *The Times*, 29 Sept. 1936.
45 Wilson, *Walks and Talks Abroad*, p. 232.
46 Ibid., p. 176.
47 Ibid., p. 233.
48 A. L. Kennedy, letter to *The Times*, 14 Oct. 1937.
49 Dawson, letter to *The Times*, 22 Oct. 1937.

50 See, e.g., Alfred Harrod, letter to *The Times*, 8 Jan. 1937.
51 See, *e.g.* Vyvyan Adams, letter to *The Times*, 9 Oct. 1936.
52 Amery, letter to *The Times*, 8 Oct. 1937.
53 Amery, letter to *The Times*, 22 Dec. 1936.
54 Page Croft, letter to *The Times*, 18 Oct. 1937.
55 Derek Walker-Smith, 'Current Comments', *English Review*, November 1936.
56 *The Patriot*, 16 July 1936.
57 *The Patriot*, 3 Dec. 1936.
58 Lord Esher, letter to *The Times*, 18 Dec. 1936.
59 E. D. O'Brien, 'Germany Looks Outwards', *English Review*, Oct. 1936.
60 E. D. O'Brien, review of H. S. Ashton's *Clamour for Colonies*, *English Review*, Feb. 1937.
61 'The Claim to Colonies', *The Times*, 28 Oct. 1937.
62 Jerrold, letter to *The Times*, 2 Jan. 1937.
63 Quoted in Haxey, op. cit., p. 215.
64 Croft, letter to *The Times*, 23 Feb. 1937.
64 Haxey, op. cit., p. 215.
66 Cazalet, letter to *The Times*, 4 Feb. 1937.
67 *Hansard*, 14 April 1937.
68 Quoted in Haxey, op. cit., p. 216.
69 Bishop of Gibraltar, letter to *The Times*, 2 March 1937.
70 *Hansard*, 21 Oct. 1937.
71 *The Times*, 3 March, 1937, quoted in Haxey, op. cit., p. 219.
72 Victor Cazalet, 'The Civil War', *Nineteenth Century and After*, April 1937.
73 *Southend Standard*, 18 March 1937.
74 *Chips*, entry for 21 April 1937 (p. 120).
75 Harold Nicolson, *Diary*, 15 July 1937.
76 Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler*, p. 266.
77 Quoted in Haxey, op. cit., p. 216.
78 Francis Yeats-Brown, *European Jungle*, p. 316.
79 Hugh Kingsmill and Malcolm Muggeridge, *1938 – A Preview of Next Year's News*, London, 1937.
80 See letter to *The Times*, 7 May 1937.
81 See Gannon, op. cit., pp. 106–11.
82 Philip Gibbs, *Ordeal in England*, London, 1938, pp. 192–3.
83 Ibid., pp. 194–6.
84 John Baker White, *Dover-Nürnberg Return*, London, 1937, pp. 68–70.
85 George Christ, 'Last Look at Nuremberg', *Anglo-German Review*, Dec. 1937.
86 Sir Charles Petrie, 'Foreign Affairs', *English Review*, March 1937.
87 P. A. Molteno, letter to *The Times*, 4 May 1937.
88 Much of it in the 'points from letters' column.
89 Admiral Sir Brian Barttelot, letter to *The Times*, 13 May 1937.
90 Francis Lewcock, letter to *The Times*, 2 Sept. 1937.
91 Quoted in *Anglo-German Review*, Sept. 1937.
92 J. F. Fraser, letter to *The Times*, 9 Jan. 1937.
93 Norman Hillson, *I Speak of Germany*, London, 1937, p. 59.
94 *The Plebs*, Jan. 1937.
95 John Baker White, *Dover-Nürnberg Return*, p. 46.
96 George Christ, 'Last Look at Nuremberg', *Anglo-German Review*, Dec. 1937.
97 Frank Clarke, MP, 'Germany as I saw it', *Anglo-German Review*, Dec. 1937.
98 See *Sunday Times*, 26 Sept. 1937.
99 Widow of Philip Snowden, Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1929–1931.
100 *Anglo-German Review*, Oct. 1937.
101 Later, from 1944 onwards, Conservative MP for Brighton.
102 William Teeling, 'Nuremberg, 1937', *Nineteenth Century and After*, Nov. 1937.
103 John Baker White, *Dover–Nürnberg Return*, London, 1937, pp. 19–20.
104 Ibid., p. 29.
105 Ibid., p. 30.
106 Ibid., p. 32.

107 Ibid., p. 63.
108 Tom Jones, *Diary*, 20 April 1937.
109 Kingsmill and Muggeridge, op. cit.
110 *Anglo-German Review,* April 1937.
111 Gannon, op. cit., p. 113.
112 Tom Jones, *Diary*, 16 April 1937.
113 Lord Lothian, 'England and Germany', *Nineteenth Century and After,* May 1937.
114 Lord Lothian, address at Chatham House, 29 June, quoted in Butler, op. cit., p. 217.
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Part 3

1938–9 The Gradual Isolation of the Extremists

[9]

1938 – From Anschluss to Munich

SUPERFICIALLY, 1938 appears a continuation of the events of early 1936, with most of 1936 and 1937 having been an interlude which had changed little. Hitler was continuing a course of aggression which now, with hindsight, appears to present a coherent and escalating pattern. The political crises of 1938 did, it is true, share one characteristic with the Rhineland coup of 1936 – the fact that there appeared to be a rational justification for them, based on 'the mistakes of Versailles', which satisfied at least part of the British public. They occurred, however, in a new situation, where danger from Germany was far more clear, and where her aggressive intentions were, to most people, an obvious danger to European peace.

In 1936, it had been possible to view German actions in a detached and leisurely manner. In 1938, as the concerns of late 1937 had shown, there was need for a good deal more urgency, and a greater awareness that one step would almost automatically lead to another. Added to this, there was almost universal condemnation of Hitler's methods in achieving his ends.

In one sense, 1936 and 1937 had been an interlude. The Austrian situation, from mid-February 1938 onwards, was the first concrete sign of German aggression for almost two years. Despite Germany's growing power, people had lived in a kind of happy unconcern, aware of the danger but lulled into a belief that Germany's known desires could be achieved by normal diplomatic methods, backed by her military power as a further diplomatic card. This explains, in part, the condemnation, even by Hitler's friends, of the 'methods' used in February and March 1938.

There were other factors, too, which were beginning to complicate the situation. The '1936 pause' and its aftermath had persuaded many people that Germany's internal policies were returning to moderation. Events in 1938 made it clear to many such people that German treatment of the Jews was inadmissible, and that other minorities such as Church leaders were having continuing unjust treatment. The climax of this was the Kristallnacht Pogrom in November. Awareness had, however, already been growing among the public at large, and was a further factor governing public opinion in relation to Germany in this period.

The desire for peace, in 1938, was accompanied by an acceptance of the justice of certain of Germany's claims. Sympathy for Germany was less, however, than at any time for the last few years. People were governed more by a sense of fear than by a real desire for friendship. The gap between 'appeasers' and 'enthusiasts' became very clear. They were both working for the same end, the avoidance of war, but the approval of Germany which had been so common in previous years was now more and more confined to the 'enthusiasts', many of whom themselves began to moderate their views. Throughout 1938 and 1939 we see a continuous move whereby pro-Nazi or pro-German activities, in their public expression, became more and more confined to extremist movements, and to the statements of a few prominent enthusiasts.

The progress of appeasement, at governmental level, has been well documented by others,[1] and needs no detailed treatment here. Our concern will be to see the extent to which actual pro-Nazi opinion continued to exist, while assessing the nuances of opinion in some people who, up till now, had seemed to be single-minded in their views. In the process, we will examine the extremist groups which grew up in the period, and attempt to assess their importance.

'The Rape of Austria'

This headline in *The Times*[2] shows the extent to which even that newspaper disapproved of Germany's methods at the time of the *Anschluss*. This is all the more striking in that, as soon as it had become clear, in mid-February, that Austria was becoming the centre of German attentions, 'there was', as Gannon puts it, 'a striking *assumption* on the part of all the newspapers that Austria was a closed case, that war in her support would be out of the question'.[3] *The Times* itself, on 17 February, had clearly stated one part of the case for letting Germany act as she wished. Versailles had been wrong in its 'ban on the incorporation of Austria in the German Reich', which was 'one of the least rational, most brittle, and most provocative artificialities of the peace settlement'. This had been followed by the stupid refusal to allow the Customs Union between the two countries. Germany should be allowed to extend her influence.[4] In subsequent articles, *The Times* had made it clear that it was aware of pro-German feeling in Austria.

On 12 March, however, in the immediate aftermath of the *Anschluss*, *The Times* declared that 'by an open exhibition of overbearing force the German Government has compelled the surrender and overthrow of Herr von Schuschnigg's Government', and commented that 'the pretexts offered for this display of precipitate force make the case no better'. In their view, 'This, the latest and worst demonstration of the methods of German foreign policy … deals a blow to the policy of appeasement by leaving it more than doubtful whether appeasement is possible in a continent exposed to the visitations of arbitrary force.'[5]

People had, of course, foretold the necessity for union between Germany and Austria. From completely different points of view, Lord Mount Temple and F. A. Voigt of the *Manchester Guardian* had seen that 'it would be impossible for Hitler to forego union with Austria even if he wished to', because 'it is only with the union that the Nazi revolution begins to have a meaning',[6] and 'the dynamic of National Liberation' would not 'exhaust itself' until the question was solved.[7] To this, of course, Mount Temple added the Sudeten question, noting that Germany's sense of nationhood was, in fact, a guarantee to other states. 'The integrity of the countries of Eastern Europe … is in no danger from such a philosophy.'[8]

Whatever people's views of the rights and wrongs of Germany's claims, it was clear to almost everybody that British action in the event of a *coup* was impossible. Even Harold Nicolson, on 9 March, noted that 'now that Russia has dropped out, we are simply not strong enough to resist Germany'.[9]

The *Anschluss* itself, by its methods, shocked not only *The Times* but also most of the national Press. This distinction between aims and methods was accentuated, for many people, by the atrocity stories coming out of Austria. Tom Jones wrote in a letter on the 20th:

I can't properly describe the moods through which we have passed in this country in the last ten days, days of a gravity unparalleled since the Great War … Our people will not fight unless they are satisfied that fair treatment of the potential enemy has been tried. But they distinguish sharply between Hitler's aims and his methods and the daily tale of persecution, repression and suicide arriving from Austria is having the effect of making this people determine that he shall never apply that régime here.[10]

The dilemma of reasonable pro-Germanists, in this situation, is shown in the case of Sir Lambert Ward, MP. Ward had been educated in Germany, and was an enthusiast for that country. Later in 1938 he was to join the Link. Nevertheless, in the House of Commons in March he was reduced to questioning the authenticity of reports of German atrocities in Austria, and stressing the 'state of affairs in Austria prior to the *dénouement* which has just taken place', while nevertheless adding: 'I do not suggest that that justifies this inroad of the Germans into Austria. I do not suggest that it

is even an excuse for that inroad, but it is better that we should face the facts as they are and look at everything before we form a judgment.'[11]

In an extensive correspondence in *The Times*, it was clear that people, while being appalled by the 'sudden and brutal methods' of Germany, and while calling for National Service to protect Britain (here Lord Lothian was particularly influential), were nevertheless concerned that there should be 'no fresh pledges or entanglements in Europe'.12 As one correspondent summed it up, 'The letters you have published show beyond doubt that, in the opinion of most clear-thinking people, it would be utterly suicidal for Britain to give any undertaking that is likely to be construed as an effort to perpetuate by force the present thoroughly inequitable *status quo* in Europe.'[13]

The same correspondence shows us, however, in occasional letters, that there were those who, in varying degrees, were prepared to excuse Germany's action. Some, like the historian Sir John Marriott, deplored the methods, but pointed to the inevitability of what had happened, once the Versailles Treaty had forced Austria to stand alone.[14] Others went further, and pointed to the moral blame we in Britain should bear. Bishop Walter Carey, who had already berated us on the colonial question, asked: 'Is it not true that if people flout the principles of Christianity – *i.e.* mercy, clemency – in the end they pay the price? Versailles was vindictive – we pay the price now; why put all the blame on Germany?'[15] C. D. Kimber, echoing this, pointed out that 'Germany's forceful action represents only the reverse of the coin with which she has been paid; we have imposed our will by force; Germany is now attempting to impose hers; we have repressed; Germany revolts'.[16] D. G. Williams, of the Crypt School, Gloucester, referring to *The Times*'s headline 'The Rape of Austria', regretted that 'there was unfortunately no equivalently ugly word to hurl at those who keep true lovers apart', and concluded that 'as usual, the Germans can do no right … From the self-righteousness of democracies may the gods deliver us!'[17]

This brings us to those enthusiasts who could find no wrong in Germany's action or in her methods. Lord Tavistock supported Germany in the *New English Weekly*; Lord Redesdale, in the House of Lords, declared that 'the gratitude of Europe and of the whole world is due to Herr Hitler for averting a possible catastrophe [civil war in Austria] of such magnitude without shedding one drop of blood'.18 Colonel Sir Thomas Moore, in *The Times*, declared that 'whatever we may think about Herr Hitler's latest coup we cannot deny that he has evolved a new and welcome technique in the practice of revolutions'; this was 'a bloodless method', brought about 'because the change has been made by the will of the peoples affected'.[19] In Lord Londonderry's view, it was our failure to hold out the hand of friendship to Germany in the past which had 'been partly responsible for those actions of Herr Hitler which, if they have astonished Europe, have only been intended to show that the regenerated Germany is an equal and not an inferior nation'.[20] Dr Meyrick Booth, an indefatigable pro-Nazi, wrote in *Peace News* and in *The Patriot* in support of the German action.[21] If the *Anschluss* had deterred some enthusiasts it had invigorated others.

It is true, nevertheless, to say that in the 1938 situation only the strongest of enthusiasts had no *arrière-pensée* about the situation; most people were aware of the aggressive nature of Germany's policies as they had been revealed, and, while accepting the inevitability of the Austrian situation, did not excuse the German action (a strong contrast to attitudes at the time of the Rhineland coup, when many had felt that Hitler's peace initiative had made his action a move towards peace rather than war). Indeed, they were deeply aware of the probability of further aggression in the near future.

Sir John Reith's almost relaxed reaction to events (by the 12th he was noting that 'things are all quiet and the Germans have got away with it'),[22] was untypical. As Chips Channon put it, on the 12th, 'Austria has been a severe shock, and already people are saying, "Czechoslovakia will be next".'[23] A number of people who, like Channon, had been disposed to friendship with Germany,

now began to have cold feet. This led them inexorably towards further desire for understanding with Germany, but this time less from attraction than from fear. The period from March to September is marked by a general desire not to be entangled in a Central European situation, and by a sense of impotence in relation to Germany, rather than by the extensive admiration and friendship which had been fostered in certain circles in the preceding years.

The Prelude to Munich

From the moment of *Anschluss*, people in Great Britain were concerned for the future, and particularly with the problem of the Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia, which was widely seen as Hitler's next excuse for aggressive action. Many participants in the *Times* correspondence in March, while stressing the need for preparation and rearmament, had also expressed the desire that no further commitments should be entered into. As Sir John Marriott put it, 'The vast majority of the people of this country … will not consent to being plunged into war, by a fanatical Opposition, save in defence of our own safety and integrity.' He applauded the 'wise reticence of the Government in reference to Czechoslovakia'.[24] The Revd Dr J. H. Shackleton Bailey put the isolationist case even more clearly. This was no time, he said, 'for becoming more deeply entangled in the European imbroglio'. He nevertheless called for the rearmament programme to be pursued energetically, 'to ensure the safety and prosperity of Great Britain and her Empire, which is, after all, a far more vital concern of ours than the fate of certain countries on the Continent which have always been beset by racial difficulties and animosities'.[25]

The case for the Sudeten Germans seemed, to many people, to be a strong one. As well as being 'a standing menace to the peace of Europe', Czechoslovakia was 'a sorry travesty of the ideal of freedom and self-determination for which we fought'. Some went so far as to advocate that it should be 'liquidated, once and for all, by the self-determination, by plebiscite, of its component parts'. This view, in a diluted form, was already held by Sir Nevile Henderson as early as 21 March, when he declared himself 'in favour of making the Czechs give way', saying that we could not possibly 'go to war over the Sudeten Germans'.[26] Vansittart might well be 'appalled by the line taken by Henderson in Berlin', describing him as 'a complete Nazi', and 'stupid and vain and … almost hysterical in the Berlin atmosphere';[27] Henderson nevertheless represented a considerable trend in British opinion, a trend followed even by Harold Nicolson's wife Vita Sackville-West, who in September took 'the line that the Sudeten Germans are justified in claiming self-determination and the Czechs would be happier without them in any case'; when Nicolson remonstrated that the Hungarians and Poles would follow suit, and Czechoslovakia would then cease to exist as an independent state, she replied that 'if it is as artificial as all that, then it should never have been created'.[28]

The apparent reasonableness of Konrad Henlein, the Sudeten leader, who visited London in May, did much to further this kind of view. Czechoslovakia was a denial of the very principle of self-determination. It had oppressed its German minority. Its Government had made a series of blunders for which it was 'today paying the penalty'.[29] All these arguments were put forward; but what they tended to hide, above all, was the strong emotion engendered by fear of the results of Britain's involvement in a situation where Hitler had probably already made up his mind.

There was, however, another major cause why one section of the community did not wish to be connected with Czechoslovakia: the fear, and hatred, of Soviet Russia, Czechoslovakia's ally. In two important letters to *The Times*, Sir Philip Gibbs gave a detailed attack on any policy which allied us with Russia in defence of a régime which was a denial of the principle of self-determination.

‘Certain sections of public opinion’, he wrote, ‘represented by the Labour Party in the House of Commons, seem to be falling more deeply into a grotesque paradox which will have the most tragic consequences if adopted by this country. It is that, in the beautiful name of collective security, democracy is to be defended and dictatorship challenged by an alliance, through France, with the most brutal and ferocious dictatorship in the world today.’ If that policy was pursued, he continued, there was no further chance of establishing peaceful relations with Germany. ‘In my opinion, as one who knows the German people and the views of its leaders, this possibility has not been lessened by the inclusion of Austria into the German Reich with the enthusiastic consent of the majority, whatever it may be, of the Austrian people themselves. To call in Soviet Russia as an ally in defending Czechoslovakia, with her 3,000,000 Germans and 1,000,000 Hungarians, would lead to the catastrophe in Europe which there is still time to avert.’[30]

Gibbs found public opinion in Germany still anxious for friendly relations with Great Britain, but ‘losing faith in our national sincerity and political sense. As regards sincerity, many of them ask, for instance, how it is that we who profess to believe in liberty, and the self-determination of peoples, should deny the will of the Sudeten Germans – a solid block of three and a half millions – to liberate themselves from the rule of the Czechs who, in that ethnographical absurdity called Czechoslovakia, are actually in a minority among the combined numbers of Germans, Poles, Hungarians, Slovaks and Ruthenians whom they govern with no light hand … Why should Europe be even remotely threatened by a war which would lead to frightful horrors and general ruin in order to uphold an artificial State which reproduces in a small area all the mixture of races of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire?’[31]

Isolationist views were to be found in many parts of the British Press at this time, but particularly in the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail.* ‘Czecho, No! No! A thousand times *no*,’[32] said the *Daily Express.* The *Daily Mail*, continued to stress the need for rearmament, while opposing any idea of involvement on the part of Great Britain, in the Central European situation. As Gannon points out, the *Express* and *Mail* ‘shared a common Czechophobia which wholly predetermined their attitudes’.[33]

Whatever people’s attitudes to Germany, the situation was complicated by the apparent injustice being done to the Sudeten Germans. Harold Balfour was no doubt right when he assessed, in March 1938, that there was too great a section of public opinion against war over Czechoslovakia for Britain to be able to go to war on this issue. With even twenty per cent of a population against war, he said, war was impossible; and the anti-war feeling affected much more than twenty per cent of the British population. ‘Particularly among ex-Servicemen there is a large, carefully cultivated sympathy to German feeling.’[34]

Whatever the attitude over the international situation, however, there was very much less praise for Germany’s internal situation than there had been in earlier years, and far more in the way of statements which started with words like ‘Whatever our views on the régime in Germany …’ In many people, a resolve to stand up to Germany, whatever the cost, was hardening, and found its clearest expression in papers such as the *News Chronicle*. In the camp for peace, the majority were ‘appeasers’; it was on the whole long-established enthusiasts, and newly-formed extremist groups, which took a more ardently pro-German line.

That even in the House of Commons enthusiasm for Germany could still prevail is shown not only by an eccentric like Captain Ramsay,[35] but also by a more conventional backbench Conservative MP, C. T. Culverwell.[36] In a speech in the post-Munich debate on 3 October he declared his lack of belief in German ‘war guilt’ and his conviction that Germany had been very unfairly treated at Versailles. The policy of hatred and mistrust had failed, he said. ‘I ask those who hate Hitler and distrust Germany – and I regret to say that most of them are, curiously enough, to

be found on the benches opposite – what has Hitler done up to now of which they can reasonably complain? … Do they suggest that Germany has not a great and good claim to absorb Austria into the Reich? … Do they seriously suggest that the Sudeten Germans had no grievances? … I suggest that the methods to which Germany has been compelled to resort, in order to obtain what I believe so far to be her just rights, have been forced upon her by the stupidity of the Allies.' Rounding on the Labour benches, he asked why it was they attacked Germany. It could not be fear, because if that were so they would not have opposed rearmament. 'If they feared Germany they would not stand accused of criminal negligence. It is not, however, that they fear Germany but that they hate dictators: They do not like the form of government which the German people are to-day enjoying [Hon. Members: Enjoying?]. At any rate, it is not for hon. gentlemen opposite to discuss the domestic affairs of Germany [Hon. Members: Why?].' Culverwell then went on to praise Hitler's achievements in Germany. He had lifted the German people 'from the depths to the position which they occupy today', and had 'put their people to work – rather on the lines which hon. gentlemen opposite themselves advocate – and enabled them to enforce their will and gain recognition for their demands before the world.' Hitler was not a pariah. 'Give a dog a bad name, and it sticks to him. Let us try to forget his misdeeds of the past, and the methods which, no doubt, we all of us deplore, but which I suggest have been very largely forced upon him.'[37]

Culverwell appears to have been a new convert to the ranks of the enthusiasts. Others, like Londonderry, Moore, and Redesdale, were continuing on their way. The general public, however, was more aware of German shortcomings than it had been in previous years and even some former enthusiasts, such as Conwell-Evans and Tennant, were becoming uneasy about German intentions.

In March, Conwell-Evans had been as convinced of German *bona fides* as he had always been. A letter to *The Times* on 28 March had justified the *Anschluss* in terms indistinguishable from any of his former statements. During the summer, however, as he himself has informed us, he was made aware of the danger of Germany's policies in the east, and of her warlike intentions.[38] That his account is true is shown by his views, as expressed to Vansittart, after a meeting with Ribbentrop in August. Hitler, he explained, was intending to go to war some time in early October, not just on behalf of the Sudetens, but to incorporate 'Bohemia and part of Moravia' into the Reich. Hitler was convinced that he could do this because France and Great Britain would remain neutral. The answer to that was a firm declaration that they would fight. This would prevent Germany's action, safeguard Czech independence, maintain British prestige, and not lower Hitler's too much, even though his war plan would fail.[39]

Conwell-Evans's change of mind was caused by an awareness of German foreign policy intentions (rather than any alteration in opinion about Germany's internal régime). Such foreign policy considerations affected a good many people who had fewer opportunities for personal insight than he did, in the year 1938.

It is ironic that Conwell-Evans, who had been ignored by Baldwin when he had put forward pro-German views, was ignored by Chamberlain when his views changed; it is equally ironic that the Foreign Office, which had opposed him in 1933–5, had been trusted by Baldwin, but that the same Foreign Office, backing his views in 1938, should have been mistrusted by Chamberlain.

Other people, beside Conwell-Evans, were having doubts, in 1938, about their earlier attitudes to Germany. Lord Lothian, for example, was convinced, after the *Anschluss*, that there was 'a momentum behind power politics which is becoming dangerous'. Unless France and Britain showed 'a little more international vigour', and made it clear 'that there are conditions under which we are willing to face war', the totalitarian states would 'begin to get out of hand'.[40] In September, on the occasion of Chamberlain's first visit to Hitler, he saw all the drawbacks of the exercise, even though he saw Chamberlain's initiative as 'noble and heroic'. In his view, Chamberlain would probably be forced to accept a compromise, whereas 'having gone as far as we

have I'm inclined to think that rather than split the country and the democratic world by immediate concessions we ought to say that if Hitler invades Czechoslovakia it means war … We have, I think, strong cards in the long run and I think Hitler would hesitate. But if, having gone as far as we have in the last three weeks, we run away now and do something which is tantamount to "selling the pass" the prestige of the totalitarian methods and powers will be such, and the derision and depression of the democracies so acute, that it will go hard with the old British Empire.'[41]

Munich and its Aftermath

Though many thinking people had moved away from friendship with Germany in 1938, one of the interesting things is that, at local level, major events appeared to wash over people without having as great an impact upon their views as one would expect. The Link's local branches are a very good example of this; the membership went up regularly, unaffected by international events. In local papers, people continued to 'write up' their visits to Germany in simple, unaffected terms. A typical article of this type is the one written by Miss Kathleen Moon, former Lady Mayoress of Bristol, in the *Bristol Evening Post* for 1 September 1938.

She had visited both Austria and Germany. In Austria her soundings appear to have been deep: 'I spoke to several local people (two waiters and a young woman) at different times, and they each said: "the union with Germany was the best thing that could have happened – now we know where we belong". Obviously the working people are all for Hitler.' Miss Moon was aware of the Jewish question, but seemingly found it fairly unimportant. In Austria, 'Jews, of course, are not wanted, and there are 200,000 of them. All would get out if they could.' In Berlin, she was 'amazed to see so many Jewish shops, and in the main streets, too. I imagined from some of the journals that they were all smashed up. This is far from being the case.' Immediately after this passage, she went on to describe a jolly evening in a beer house. 'The goodwill expressed was most delightful to experience … The atmosphere was about as friendly and jolly as it possibly could be. "How mad a thing war is", we said as we walked home.'[42]

The war clouds were, indeed, becoming visible even to observers such as this. After something of a lull in international relations, 'as the Nuremberg Rally drew near, it suddenly became clear that questions of war and peace might lie in the Sudeten dispute'.[43] Even so, a lot of perfectly ordinary British people flocked to the Nuremberg Rally, like Alderman Mrs Bessie Roberts of Croydon and her daughter, who on their return described it to their local Link branch as 'an unforgettable experience'.[44] More prominent enthusiasts continued to attend the rally, as well. Hitler's interpreter, Paul Schmidt, noted that 'foreign countries were even more strongly represented than in the previous year. The British Ambassador, who, at the last Rally, had spent only two days at Nuremberg, remained almost until the end, and among the British guests were Lords Stamp, Clive, Hollenden, Brocket and McGowan, as well as Norman Hulbert, MP'.[45]

The famous *Times* leader of 7 September, putting forward the idea of the cession of the Sudetenland, caused a furore not only in its own letter columns but throughout informed circles, even though the article was merely a continuation of the paper's established policy. Opinion was strongly divided between those who 'broke out into a volley of abuse', including most of the other newspapers,[46] and those who believed that it was 'the only feasible solution',[47] and that it was 'better for the peace of Europe that this comparatively homogeneous block of German-inhabited and German-speaking territory should be joined on to Germany'.[48] There were many facets to the debate, but almost all were on the plane of appeasement versus firmness. Sir Arnold Wilson called for negotiation,[49] Sir John Fischer Williams stressed the urgency of the situation, stating that 'Prague must be brought to see that it must take the only possible course without further delay',[50]

Sir Frederick Maurice offered the services of the British Legion to supervise the orderly evacuation of territory.[51] But there were few public statements of a pro-German nature at this stage of things, except, of course, in biased journals such as the *Anglo-German Review* and *The Patriot*, As Bruce Lockhart assessed the situation, one thought must have prevailed in the negotiators' minds: 'Was Europe to be plunged into war in order to keep 3,000,000 Germans in and under Czechoslovakia against their will?'[52] Among those who were against standing up to Germany, the same thought was uppermost. The Munich debate, in the crisis situation of September 1938, is no place to look for settled views on the German régime.

The immediate aftermath of the Munich agreement was, for most people, either disgust or relief. As the Duke of Windsor put it to Bruce Lockhart, 'war would have destroyed both the democracies and the dictatorships, and the victory would have gone only to communism'.[53] Tom Jones declared, 'Everybody of course is relieved that we are at peace today and not at war, and those of us who are round about Whitehall are agreed that if we confine our vision to September there was nothing the PM could do other than what he did.'[54]

There was, of course, 'a chorus of abuse of Herr Hitler', which infuriated those who were convinced that it would vitiate the 'delicate negotiations' which lay ahead. A letter to *The Times* from P. Gardner-Smith sums up the appeasement view in mid-October. 'There are many elements in Nazi policy which we all deplore', he wrote, 'but … the internal constitution of Germany is not our business, and if the impression is created that Herr Hitler is regarded in this country with nothing but hatred and suspicion the negotiations will be wrecked before they begin … Admittedly there are some who do not wish to reach an understanding with Germany, preferring to plunge the world into war rather than to tolerate the continuance of a State which constitutes a barrier to world revolution. With this party argument is useless … Let all who are not obsessed by ulterior motives unite to show that England has not forgotten its manners, and that we are prepared to deal with our neighbours in a spirit of reason and generosity. Thus and thus only can civilization be saved.'[55]

To most people who were in favour of the Prime Minister's actions, their views were justified by the fact that Germany's aggression in 1938 had been based on the 'righting of wrongs', and on actions related to the German population of Europe. Once Germany was satisfied on these matters, it was felt by many, causes for war would be removed. Conwell-Evans was rare, in his appreciation of Germany's further aims. The Nazis, after all, believed in the importance of race. Any idea of further expansion would 'conflict with the Nazi doctrine that a nation to be healthy must be homogeneous – the doctrine which has inspired the extrusion of the Jews'. The Nazi leaders were speaking the truth, it was believed, when they 'affirmed … that they have no desire to include large alien populations in the Reich'.[56]

It was the events of 1939 which were to destroy that belief. In the meanwhile, however, views in relation to Germany's internal régime were to be put to the test by the events of November, the Kristallnacht Pogrom. It will be worth comparing British reactions to November 1938 and March 1939, which will give us some insight into the main influences governing opinion on Germany in this period. Before this, however, we should perhaps look at the various movements devoted to Anglo-German friendship in 1938.

1 See Gilbert and Gott, *The Appeasers*, Middlemas, *Diplomacy of Illusion*, Colvin, *The Chamberlain Cabinet*, Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler, etc.*

2 *The Times*, 15 March 1938.

3 Gannon, op. cit., p. 145.

4 First leader, *The Times*, 17 Feb. 1938.

5 First leader, *The Times*, 12 March 1938.

6 *Manchester Guardian*, 16 Feb. 1938 (F. A. Voigt).
7 Lord Mount Temple, letter to *The Times*, 26 Feb. 1938.
8 Ibid.
9 Harold Nicolson, letter to Vita Sackville-West, 9 March 1938 (Nicolson *Diaries and Letters*, 1, 329).
10 Tom Jones, letter to Abraham Flexner, 20 March 1938 (*Diary with Letters*, pp. 395–7).
11 Sir Albert Lambert Ward, *Hansard*, 14 March 1938.
12 Sir Charles Mallet, letter to *The Times*, 16 March 1938.
13 John Hartland-Swan, letter to *The Times*, 22 March 1938.
14 Sir John Marriott, letter to *The Times*, 15 March 1938.
15 Bishop Walter Carey, letter to *The Times*, 17 March 1938.
16 C. D. Kimber, letter to *The Times*, 17 March 1938.
17 D. G. Williams, letter to *The Times*, 16 April 1938.
18 Lord Redesdale, in House of Lords, quoted in *Anglo-German Review*, April 1938.
19 Col. Sir Thomas Moore, letter to *The Times*, 17 March 1938.
20 Lord Londonderry, *Ourselves and Germany*, London, 1938, p. 24.
21 Meyrick Booth, letter in *Peace News*, 26 March 1938; article in *The Patriot*, 7 April 1938.
22 *The Reith Diaries*, entry for 12 March 1938 (p. 219).
23 *'Chips'*, entry for 12 March 1938.
24 Sir John Marriott, letter to *The Times*, 19 March 1938.
25 The Revd Dr J. H. Shackleton Bailey, letter to *The Times*, 22 March 1938.
26 Bruce Lockhart, *Diary*, 21 March 1938.
27 Harold Nicolson, *Diary*, 11 April 1938.
28 Harold Nicolson, *Diary*, 15 Sept. 1938.
29 Professor Charles Sarolea, letter to *The Times*, 28 Sept. 1938.
30 Sir Philip Gibbs, letter to *The Times*, 19 March 1938.
31 Sir Philip Gibbs, letter to *The Times*, 10 May 1938.
32 Leader, *Daily Express*, 30 April 1938, quoted in Gannon, op. cit.
33 Gannon, op. cit., p. 225.
34 Harold Balfour, MP, letter to *The Times*, 21 March 1938.
35 See pp. 353–5.
36 Cyril Tom Culverwell, Member for Bristol West since 1928.
37 *Hansard*, 3 Oct. 1938.
38 T. P. Conwell-Evans, *None So Blind*, London, 1947.
39 Document, 30 Aug. 1938, in Vansittart Papers, quoted in Middlemas, op. cit., p. 298.
40 Lothian, letter to the Aga Khan, 31 March 1938, quoted in Butler, op. cit., p. 223.
41 Lothian to Lady Astor, 16 Sept. 1938, quoted in Butler, op. cit., p. 225.
42 'Ex-Lady Mayoress's Impressions in Central Europe', by Miss Kathleen Moon, *Bristol Evening Post*, 1 Sept. 1938.
43 Gannon, op. cit., p. 175.
44 *Anglo-German Review*, Oct. 1938.
45 Paul Schmidt, *Hitler's Interpreter*, London, 1951, p. 89. All those mentioned, except Clive, were members of the Anglo-German Fellowship. Brocket was a particularly convinced pro-Nazi.
46 Dawson's diary for 8 Sept. 1938, quoted in Gannon, op. cit., p. 181.
47 Douglas S. S. Steuart, letter to *The Times*, 8 Sept. 1938.
48 C. W. Guillebaud, letter to *The Times*, 15 Sept. 1938.
49 Sir Arnold Wilson, letter to *The Times*, 21 Sept. 1938.
50 Sir John Fischer Williams, letter to *The Times* 21 Sept. 1938.
51 Sir F. Maurice, letter to *The Times*, 28 Sept. 1938.
52 Bruce Lockhart, *Diary*, 19 Sept. 1938.
53 Duke of Windsor, letter to Bruce Lockhart, received on 19 Oct. 1938, quoted in *The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart*, p. 403.
54 Tom Jones, letter to Lady Grigg, 5 Oct. 1938 (*Diary with Letters*, p. 413).
55 P. Gardner-Smith, letter to *The Times*, 12 Oct. 1938.
56 Professor W. Alison Phillips, letter to *The Times*, 20 Sept. 1938.

[10]

Pro-German Movements, 1938–9

AMID THE events of 1938, strong pro-German opinion became isolated from the more general desire for peace to be found among the appeasers. In this situation, various extremist groups came into prominence. Other organs of opinion, of course, continued on their way, especially the *Anglo-German Review* and *The Patriot.* The Anglo-German Fellowship, in a muted way, continued to work for Anglo-German friendship. The new groups fall into two categories.

The first, and most important of these was the Link, a movement of considerable complexity, whose membership ranged from the most innocent of provincial pro-Germanists to convinced pro-Nazis of a fairly disquieting kind. In its growing popularity, right up to the Second World War, we can find evidence of a continuing pro-Germanism in certain areas of the general public, unaffected by the growing awareness of the reality of Nazi policies to be found in people closer to the centres of information.

The other movements in question are a different matter. Their membership was small, their influence negligible, but they are interesting for the way in which they jumped on the bandwagon of the Czechoslovakian problem, and then, after March 1939, moved to very strong views on the 'Jews' War' which was being fomented.

The Link

In 1938 the Link went from strength to strength. Its membership rose regularly as the months went by, apparently unaffected by any of the political events of the year. In March it was nearly 1,800, in July 2,400, in September 2,600. By the end of the year it had leaped (despite the events of November) to almost 3,500, and by June 1939 it was over 4,300.

The organisation was very decentralised and individual branches were virtually autonomous. The characteristics of the movement, therefore, varied considerably from place to place. It is possible, nevertheless, to give some idea of its main aims, and of the make-up of the membership.

Firstly, the National Council. This was a not particularly impressive lot of people, compared with the Anglo-German Fellowship. Prominent pro-Germanists like Colonel Moore, Lord Mount Temple, Lord Arnold, etc., do not appear to have been involved. If they had, their presence would have been advertised by the indefatigable Domvile. Apart from Domvile himself, the most prestigious of the founding members of the Council appears to have been Colonel Sir John Brown (of the British Legion), other members being C. E. Carroll, Professor A. P. Laurie, Miss Susan Fass (of the Anglo-German Kameradschaft) and Professor Sir Raymond Beazley. In other words, it was centred very much on the editor of and the contributors to the *Anglo-German Review.* Later additions included Lord Redesdale, Sir Albert Lambert Ward, MP, Captain Edward Unwin, VC (a hero of Gallipoli), Councillor W.-J. Bassett-Lowke, of Northampton, Lord Sempill, Mr A. E. R. Dyer, Mr Archibald Crawford, KC, and Mr Hubert Maddocks. Though Lord Londonderry sent a letter of encouragement to the Ulster branch on its foundation, he does not appear to have played any great part in Link affairs. A member who joined the Link just before war started was the Duke

of Westminster.

The Council itself was only to be of importance at moments of crisis, when it spoke for the membership. Domvile, Laurie and Carroll appear to have been the prime movers, organising speakers, etc., and themselves speaking to the local branches. Ward, Unwin, Redesdale and Sempill appear to have been fairly useful as names. The rest were prominent provincial members (Bassett-Lowke in Northampton, Maddocks in Southend, Beazley in Birmingham).

It is to the local associations, and their membership, that we must look for the main activity of the Link. The most successful of these were in urban areas, and particularly in the London suburbs and in the Midlands. There were, however, flourishing branches in the West Country, which had a very different flavour, and others in Service towns such as Portsmouth and Bromley. Ulster had its own branch, of reasonable size.

In the urban branches, the Committees seem to have been made up almost entirely of highly respectable local citizens, many of them professional or semi-professional men, and often with a strong local government contingent. In Croydon, for example, leading members included Alderman Mrs Bessie J. Roberts (‘one of the strongest pillars of the … branch’),1 Alderman C. H. Gibson (the chairman), Councillor E. E. Constable (president of the local branch of the British Legion), Councillor E. W. Turner, a local JP and an auctioneer and estate agent. In Northampton Councillor Bassett-Lowke (the chairman) was a pillar of the local Labour Party. In Birmingham prominent supporters included Alderman W. Byng Kenrick, Councillor Bernard Alderson, and A. K. Jackson (the Warwickshire cricketer). The chairman of the Ulster Branch was Alderman Jas. A. Duff, JP, the president of the Bristol branch as F. A. Wilshire (a Bristol barrister and the Recorder of Bridgwater), while a prominent member of the Glasgow branch (founded in February 1939) was Councillor Rosslyn Mitchell, a Glasgow solicitor who had been Labour MP for Paisley from 1924 to 1929.

The clergy, too, was represented, including the Revd G. C. Sharpe (President, Acton and Ealing branch), the Revd G. Bennett (Chairman, Wolverhampton branch), and the Revd A. R. Castle, the founder of a short-lived Maidstone branch.

There was strong Naval support in certain areas, which presumably denotes the influence of Domvile. The Bromley branch was founded at the Royal Naval Club, and had as its chairman Commander C. L. A. Woollard. The chairman of the Southend branch was Commander G. A. D. Brown. Prominent members of the Portsmouth branch were Captain G. L. Gosson and Vice-Admiral Powell, while the representative for Dorset was Captain T. B. Fellowes, RN.

The West Country branches, which were formed in early 1939, present a rather different picture from the urban branches. They appear to have been rather more ‘county’ and military, with prominent members being Mr A. C. Streatfeild, from Pylle, near Shepton Mallet, Lt.-Col. H. S. White from Bishop’s Lydeard, near Taunton, and Lt.-Col. C. D. Roe (the chairman of the Wells branch).

The Wells and District branch, with its membership of farmers and landowners, was, however, untypical. Most branches were suburban, and, apart from Birmingham and Ulster, the most flourishing branches were in a close ring around London. The members were perfectly ordinary people, drawn to Anglo-German friendship, who seem to have been almost unaware of the political implications of membership. Some had actual connexions with Germany: A. K. Jackson, the cricketer, for example, had a German wife, and they both joined the Link ‘with great enthusiasm’, but withdrew when, after visits to London meetings, they became aware of certain tendencies within the movement.2 Others remained unaware.

Southend gives us a picture of the type of activities which an average Link branch undertook, and of the kind of membership involved. It was one of the first branches to be founded, its hon. secretary being Hubert S. Maddocks, of Westcliff-on-Sea, who was to become an important

member of the National Council. After a first meeting, which included various prominent local people, it set about organising its committee, which was formed at a meeting on 19 January 1938. The titles of the sub-committees give one a good idea of the role they saw themselves as playing: Extension, Exchange, Lecture, Entertainments (Dances, Socials, etc.), Cultural. The subsequent meetings were a combination of social events, film shows, and outside speakers, with arrangements for travel and exchanges. A party in the ballroom of the Grand Hotel, Leigh-on-Sea, gave the 'atmosphere of a German Beer Garden'[3]; a second 'Bierabend' filled the large Winter Garden of the Palace Hotel, Southend, in February 1939;[4] a third such function was held by the sister branch of Ilford (attended by Southend members) in March, and the local MP, Geoffrey Hutchinson, KC, gave a speech in which he 'expressed his satisfaction at the work being done by the Link'.[5]

In the process, however, considerable publicity was, consciously or unconsciously, given to German propaganda. Laurie and Domvile came and spoke. A German speaker, Dr Otto Wagner, spoke on 'the aims of German foreign policy'.[6] Hubert Maddocks, and others, stressed the pernicious role played by the press in undermining the progress in Anglo-German relations. On one occasion 'the audience roared their disapproval of the underhanded press campaign against Mr Chamberlain, and the methods of certain warmongering politicians'.[7]

Other branches mirrored the same pattern, sometimes in different proportions. In Birmingham, for example, there were frequent meetings, dances, *etc*. and even a garden party; some meetings consisted almost entirely of 'reminiscences' of Germany. A hard political core was, however, provided by speakers such as Beazley and Domvile, and by frequent German propagandists, who praised their country's régime. The Croydon branch, as well as having a local vicar talking on 'peace through friendship', also sent a local youth to Hamburg to spend his holidays as a guest of the Hitler Youth, and sent two of its members to the Nuremberg Congress. The Portsmouth branch, as well as holding social evenings at which 'the usual jolly "Link" atmosphere prevailed',[8] also interspersed film shows with talks by Laurie.

It would be a mistake to see the bulk of the Link membership as consisting of extremists. Some extremists were naturally attracted to it, but most provincial and suburban members appear to have been sincere believers in Anglo-German friendship, typical on a more humble level of so many of the people we have seen in these years. The more extreme characteristic of the Link lay, however, in certain members of its national leadership (i.e. Domvile, Carroll, and Laurie, all of strong pro-Nazi sympathies), and in certain branches in inner London, together with the Ulster branch.

Some individual members in other areas were, naturally enough, former Fascists who latched on to the new movement. Lady Pearson, of Canterbury (the sister of Sir Henry Page Croft), and L. A. Mohan, of Epsom, had been BUF candidates in 1936, for example. The Revd Maurice Yate Allen of Moss Vicarage, Doncaster (founder of the Doncaster branch), was a well-known extremist.[9]

Though infiltration of this kind was probably widespread, the activities of most branches do not appear to have reflected its influence, publicly at least. The history of the Northampton branch is particularly interesting on this score. At the inaugural meeting on 5 May 1939, 'the attendance … included left-wing Socialists, local town councillors, Rotarians, Conservatives, a German, members of the Society of Friends, the British Union, the Peace Pledge Union, and the British Legion – all enthusiastic for the cause of friendship with Germany'.[10] Of the chairman, Councillor Bassett-Lowke, Lord Paget (who at the time was Labour candidate for Northampton) has written: 'Bill Bassett-Lowke was a model manufacturer, a Fabian Socialist, an internationalist, as good as gold, and as soft as a mop. He was a natural sucker for "The Link".'[11] Incidentally, by this stage such activity led him into trouble with his local Labour Party, though Bassett-Lowke had publicly

been a leading member of the Link since July 1938. There was some correspondence sent to the local Labour publication *Town Crier,* which never saw the light of day, because it was 'withdrawn by mutual consent'. His local ward met twice, and later Bassett-Lowke was asked to meet the Local Executive Committee, which subsequently decided to 'ask head office of the party to give a lead on whether membership of the "Link" was compatible with membership of the Labour Party'. At a special meeting on 17 July, a message from London was read out (but unfortunately we have no record of its contents). A statement from Bassett-Lowke was also read out, in which he indicated that he was prepared to relinquish the chairmanship of the Local Executive Committee of the branch, and also membership of the Link, if Head Office requested it and 'gave reasons'. It seems likely, however, that the NEC dithered over the matter, and postponed any recommendation; the local branch were told that the NEC 'would be dealing with the whole matter at a meeting of its organisation sub-committee on 19th July'. There is no record of any subsequent action. The local agent reports that 'the whole matter was then overtaken by events – the outbreak of war'.[12] Yet war did not break out until 3 September. It appears that what happened must have been very much what Lord Paget suggests: 'I do not know what the national executive did. They probably filed it!'13 Bassett-Lowke was later made an alderman.

The uncertainty shown by the local Labour party, even though they disapproved of the Link, shows that at the local level, in many places, the movement had an aura of respectability which was quite different from that of an overtly Fascist organisation. (If Bassett-Lowke had been associated with Mosley, the call for his resignation would have been immediate and automatic; as it is, through uncertainty, he seems to have been allowed for a considerable time, from July 1938 onwards, to remain a member of the Link and a member of the local Labour Party.) The movement's apparent respectability is also shown by the invitations to speak which were given to Domvile, including an invitation to Canford School, sent by the Headmaster, the Revd C. B. Canning.[14]

There were, however, branches which were anything but innocuous. Allen's Doncaster branch appears to have consisted mainly of himself, but the Ulster branch, which within three months of its inauguration had over a hundred members, had a chairman, Alderman Duff, who saw Hitler as 'a white man in spirit, absolutely faithful, worthy of the trust which his people place in him.' A leading member of the Committee was Mrs D. G. Harnett, that pillar of British Fascists, Ltd,[15] who now emerged from her retirement to travel over a hundred miles from her home to the meetings in Belfast.

The Acton and Ealing branch was another suspect one. Its secretary, Eric H. Whittleton, is on record as having believed, in 1935, that any patriotic political movement in this country had 'to decide its attitude to "Organised Jewry"', and also be prepared to replace democracy by 'a more modern and more suitable form of Government'.[16] L. J. Hirst, who took the chair at one of the meetings, had formerly been chief organiser of the League of Loyalists.[17] One of its speakers, in May 1939, was Miss Margaret Bothamley, among whose recorded views was the belief that 'the Jewish question was behind the determination to assert the "independence" of Austria' and that 'Vienna had been made to obey, if not to love and honour, the power from which Germany had freed herself'.18 (Miss Bothamley ended up in Germany in the early months of the war, working for the radio in the same office as William Joyce. She has been described by Rebecca West as being, at that stage, 'an elderly lady … in a state of extreme confusion.')[19]

The most clearly pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic branch, however, was Central London, founded in January 1939. Within months it had a membership of over 400, second only to Birmingham. Miss Bothamley was its secretary, and very much set its tone. She herself gave one of its first lectures, on 3 February. Other speakers included Philip Spranklin, formerly of the BUF, and now a member

of Goebbels's Munich Foreign Press Office (who spoke to several branches at this time on the Press and its distortion of German news), Major-General J. F. C. Fuller, of the BUF (who had just returned, on 19 May, from a visit to Germany to attend Hitler's birthday celebrations), and Captain Ramsay, who spoke on the 'Secret Forces Working for War' in June. The presence of Ramsay shows the extent to which this branch had been taken over by the theme of the Judaeo-Masonic plot. At another meeting its vice-chairman, Richard Finlay, described 'the influence exerted by the Jews in Europe for many centuries as an evil one'. In a talk entitled 'The Hidden Hand in European Affairs' he declared that 'the people of Britain … would never fight to uphold usury'.[20]

The activities of different branches in May and June 1939 will, however, show the variety that still existed within the movement. Central London had various German speakers, Fuller, Ramsay and Finlay. Glasgow had a musical evening, a 'mystery' bus tour, and numerous rambles. Northampton had talks on 'Impressions of Germany'. Birmingham had a discussion evening (mostly concerned with German food), a German supper party ('the most successful event ever'), and a talk by Maddocks of Southend. Ilford had a speech by Domvile, and an outing. In the West, amid speeches about ex-service links, new branches were founded at Bath and at Bristol.

The national leadership attempted to play it all ways. In individual speeches they might praise the Nazi line, but for general consumption they stressed the 'non-political' nature of the Link. 'Only those anxious to create trouble', wrote Domvile, 'would endeavour to saddle it with ulterior motives'.[21] Even while attacking Churchill in a speech, Domvile could repeat his refrain that 'the Link has no politics'.[22]

In March, 1939, in answer to a question about the Link from Geoffrey Mander, MP, the Secretary of State for Home Affairs stated: 'I understand that this organisation is mainly for the purposes of pro-Nazi and anti-Semite propaganda. More than that I do not know.' Domvile's immediate response was to write on behalf of the Link Council to protest that 'The Link's sole object is to promote better relations between the British and German peoples by non-political means; this is the course advocated both by His Majesty and the Prime Minister on more than one occasion. I am surprised that you should endeavour to belittle our work.'[23] To Link members he wrote: 'Link policy remains constant. Friendship between the British and German peoples is the keystone to world peace.'[24] That Domvile's attitude was believed by the local membership is shown by the reaction of the Wolverhampton branch, which claimed that Mander showed complete ignorance, because he did not seem to realise that 'The Link was founded by a British Admiral, and its national council is composed of distinguished Englishmen who have given abundant evidence of their loyalty … The Link is an independent, non-party movement, consisting of people of all shades of opinion, united by a common desire to replace suspicion and hatred by comradeship and a desire for understanding.'[25]

Domvile was certainly more restrained in his public statements at this time than he was to be after the war, when, after the bitter experience of prison, he became convinced that his downfall had been brought about by 'Judmas', the Judaeo-Masonic plot.[26] Nevertheless, to those who looked for it, there was a strong strain of anti-Semitism in his thought, hedged around by polite qualifications. 'The Jews of Germany have been harshly treated, and the undoubted persecution that has taken place is strongly deprecated', he wrote in September 1938. On the other hand, 'this persecution has been grossly exaggerated in our newspapers, whilst the very real grievances of the German people against the Jews have never been placed before the British public'. While the Link had 'never attacked the Jews', and had 'no desire to do so', having 'no "anti" prejudices of any description', it was nevertheless true that Jews had started attacking it. The daily press was 'completely muzzled' when it came to reporting facts unfavourable to the Jews. 'There are not wanting signs of increased feeling against Jews in this country', he wrote. 'If trouble should arise,

our muzzled press would have to bear a very heavy burden of responsibility for its share in the calamity due to its failure to preserve an impartial attitude.'[27]

Domvile's official messages to the Link were, however, far more innocuous. At the time of the November Pogrom, for example, the Link Council deplored 'the recent embitterment of the Jewish question in Germany', which had caused 'a violent revulsion of feeling … in this country',[28] even though they continued to work for Anglo-German friendship. The apparent moderation of official Link statements meant that most branches, except those in central London, were unaware of anti-Semitic tendencies within the movement (though there were isolated instances in the case of individuals elsewhere). This uncertainty about the nature of the Link is also shown, at a national level, by the affiliation to it in March 1939 of the Anglo-German Brotherhood, the religious organisation for Anglo-German friendship, under its new chairman, the Revd H. K. Percival Smith. From now on the Brotherhood had its headquarters and secretariat at the Link headquarters.

The variety of views on the Link's role, within the movement itself, means that it is hard to assess what lessons as to British public opinion can be drawn from it. It is nevertheless clear that a large number of ordinary people in this country, undeterred by international events, were prepared to work for Anglo-German friendship, and that in those areas where there were flourishing branches even more people were prepared to attend their functions. An occurrence on 2 June 1939 is very revealing. At a well-attended meeting at Tamworth, at which Domvile had spoken, a local solicitor, Howard Clifford, objected to the content of the speech, and proposed that a vote of thanks should not be given to Domvile. His voice was drowned in stamping, catcalls and jeers, and he found no seconder. Amid cheers for Domvile, Clifford left the hall.

The English Mistery, the English Array, and the New Pioneer

In 1938 and 1939 a number of bodies, loosely centred around Lord Lymington, began to display characteristics of interest to our study.

Gerard Wallop, Lord Lymington, was the heir to the 8th Earl of Portsmouth. Brought up in the United States until the age of eleven, he was then sent to school in England, and served in the European War, after which, as heir to the family titles and lands, he settled down as a landowner in Hampshire. He was already deeply concerned with problems relating to the land, and soon became part of a group of 'agricultural philosophers' whose deep feeling was that 'our headlong "progress" was destroying our minds and bodies in peace as well as war'.[29] Strong influences upon him were Professor George Stapledon and Rolf Gardiner, with whom he formed the group later to be known as the 'Kinship in Husbandry'. In 1929 he was returned as the Conservative MP for Basingstoke.

From late 1930 onwards he was very much influenced by the English Mistery. This was a society 'organised into separate Kin of anything from ten to thirty people, a sort of cell system designed ultimately to permeate and set the standards for districts, villages and crafts and trades'.[30] It was essentially a back-to-the-land movement, and at the same time 'a school for leadership … a school for living the values … of honesty, service to England and complete dedication'.[31] It had been founded by a man called William Sanderson, whose book *Statecraft*, published in 1927, had laid down mystical rules for government based on various 'lost secrets': the Secret of Memory, as opposed to the mere paraphernalia of learning; the Secret of Race, on which was based the hereditary transmission of memory (here the experience of stockbreeders was of great importance); the Secret of Government, based on tradition; the Secret of Power, which, like the other Secrets, had been destroyed by 'industrial ideals'; the Secret of Organisation, based on service; the Secret of Property (with feudalism being the ideal); and the Secret of Economics,

which was destroyed by the 'moneyed interests', the 'controllers of finance, who number less than three per cent of the nation and perform no services whatever'.[32] It is significant that the pamphlet, *An Introduction to the English Mistery,* while stressing religion, the family, etc., had a special section on aliens, stressing that 'while every country can absorb a certain number of aliens … the result will, however, be disastrous if the aliens are numerous or influential enough materially to affect national habits and institutions'. Moreover, there were two types of alien: 'Norwegians, Danes, Dutch and other people of North-West Europe' were 'so near to us in race and tradition' that things were reasonably all right. 'Some races, on the other hand, differ very widely from us both in character and tradition …'[33] As Lymington was later to put it, 'We did not regard ourselves as Herrenvolk but we wanted our revival to be Anglo-Saxon in the sense that Alfred the Great was Anglo-Saxon.'[34] Among MP members were Michael Beaumont[35] (who left at an early stage) and Reginald Dorman-Smith,[36] who was a member both of the Mistery and its successor the English Array, and who wrote, when Governor of Burma, at the time of the fall of Singapore, that 'his Mistery training stood him in good stead throughout the crisis and gave him strength to carry on'.[37] Lymington was to write that the English Mistery 'coloured all my political thought after late 1930 and dictated most of my standards of value'.[38]

In the House of Commons, Lymington became more and more dissatisfied with parliamentary life, however, particularly after the formation of the National Government in 1931. It was a 'morass of compromise'. Nothing was done to solve unemployment. He visited the worst areas, on a private fact-finding mission, and returned 'a sadder and more inwardly knowing man'. In the House he urged constructive action, but in vain. He felt 'the same frustration over rearmament'. Above all, he was horrified by the decline in agriculture, which was not only essential to defence, but was also 'the core of our existence'. The problems of agriculture were ignored, apart from minor tinkerings with the system, and cheap food was imported from abroad. The soil itself was becoming eroded and 'leeched of its fertility'.[39] Eventually, in frustration, Lymington asked for the Chiltern Hundreds in 1934, 'being unable any longer to breathe the polluted atmosphere of the National Government'.[40] He declared that he was 'resigning … to devote my energies and to play such part as I am able in arousing our people to the necessities of national defence before it is too late, and above all to help in trying to re-establish English character and tradition and in re-creating local leadership'.[41]

Famine in England, the book which Lymington published in early 1938, was an expression of his heartfelt conviction of the need for a new policy with regard to agriculture, which, in the event of war, would be as important to our salvation as rearmament was. If there was war, then 'the danger from famine, and the panic and revolution which famine would cause, are so terrible that nothing might be left of our sound stocks'.[42] Most of the book was concerned with 'back to the land' policies. There were, however, certain side issues that are significant. Famine would cause breakdown and disorder, in Lymington's view, because in every city there was a 'scum of subhuman population', who were 'the willing tools of the communist, since revolution means an opportunity to gratify their lusts'. While some were naturally 'the dregs of English blood', many were alien. A peacetime invasion had taken place over the last hundred years. Colonel Lane's *The Alien Menace* had shown its extent:

Half the European conspiracies of the Left in the last fifty years have been hatched in London. These immigrants have invaded the slums and the high places as well … One by one they have 'muscled in' on the Englishman's livelihood till they are everywhere in key positions. With them has come corruption and disrespect for the ancient decencies … This then, is the spawning-ground for panic, looting, revolution and wholesale bloodshed.[43]

The really healthy peoples, said Lymington, were the happy ones who had a sane respect for the

permanent things around them. They had ‘a family feeling and a racial feeling, and a determination to guard their culture’. For this reason the words ‘kind’ and ‘gentle’ had the same meaning and derivation, from ‘kinship’, or ‘within the tribe’. ‘We once discriminated and kept our kindness or our gentleness to foster first of all the best in our own people. One can still see and admire this in some of the peasant populations of Europe, and in the new spiritual awakening of Germany.’[44] The English should only cross-breed with other Nordic stocks, avoiding even the mixed Mediterranean breeds. ‘Our northern stock has been continually weakened – first in battle for two thousand years, and later by trade, which gave the worst stocks, the people of the ghettoes and the bazaar and the Mediterranean types, their opportunity to flourish at the expense of the northern races. We in Britain have spilled our precious, finer blood in three centuries across the world. The only hope to recoup that loss is to give our blood the chance of breeding on the land again at home and in the temperate parts of the Empire … The land cannot be made fertile without men upon it, and without land the northern stock dwindles and the cross-breds flourish in the towns.’[45]

In Lymington’s view, war with Germany or Italy would be suicidal. Yet it might well come, because ‘the virility of Germany’ loomed ominous to our politicians, and because of ‘the endless propaganda directed in a sinister way against selected Dictatorships in Europe’, which meant that the Germans and Italians felt that we hated them, and that they had to fight us, which they would more readily do if they considered us weak. We must therefore become strong, through agriculture and rearmament. ‘Then we may learn how to enjoy peace.’ The average Englishman, in Lymington’s view, ‘would like to see a prosperous, healthy and friendly Germany’.[46]

The English Array, formed in late 1936 by Lymington after splitting off from Sanderson, began after the *Anschluss* to interest itself in the German situation. In its *Quarterly Gazette* for April, for example, Lymington wrote that the *Anschluss* had been a good thing, and that ‘we must do what we can to save our country from being forced into a war which would mark the end of white civilisation’.[47] In the same number Rolf Gardiner wrote of the way in which central Europe, under the German leadership, was leading the way towards native traditions. In the July *Gazette*, an article contrasted so-called democracy with dictatorships. In the former men were free to grind the faces of the poor, ‘advertise practically worthless products as food or medicine’, and distort foreign news; ‘the degenerate and morally deficient are free to propagate their bad stock, which becomes a charge on the rest of the community; the aliens are free to enter the country at the rate of one hundred and fifty a month and take many jobs which might go to British men and women, while they are also free to destroy our culture and lower our health by miscegenation’. On the other hand, whatever our views as to the methods of Germany and Italy, there was no doubt that ‘in those countries duty to the whole body politic comes before the selfish interests of any particular individual or even of a whole class … Without in any way condoning all the actions of individual Nazis or Fascisti, it is absurd to represent the present Governments of Germany and Italy as tyrannies feared and hated by all, or their subjects as slaves.’ Nazism aimed at ‘constructive racial regeneration’, and, though it had ‘fallen foul of certain politically-minded clergy’, was ‘not hostile to all religion’.[48] In September there was a camp held for officers of the English Array at Farleigh Wallop, at which, among others, Reginald Dorman-Smith and Rolf Gardiner spoke. Gardiner ‘showed how hope can be given to a defeated and degenerate nation by sacrifice and singleness of mind working outside the ordinary bureaucratic standards; how the regeneration of Hitler’s Germany was made possible beforehand by a few pioneers’.[49]

Until 1938 the English Array had not been much concerned with foreign affairs. Its *Gazette* had usually given details of the annual camp, and dealt mainly with matters relating to soil, nutrition, *etc.* The membership was mainly rural and landowning, with its leaders taking fanciful and faintly

medieval titles. Lymington was Marshal of the Array. The Hon. Richard de Grey, brother of Lord Walsingham, was Lieutenant of the King Alfred Muster in Dorset. Sir Geoffrey Congreve, who owned about 3,000 acres in Staffordshire, was Area Marshal for that county. The Clerk to the Array was Jack Hunt, Lord Lymington's Agent. A certain Richard Marker was Leader of the New Muster at Gittesham, East Devon. Captain R. J. M. Wilson was Steward of the Fens. Prominent members included Baron John de Rutzen, of Slebeck Park, Pembrokeshire, Colonel Hardwicke Holderness, a retired Indian Army Officer living in Lincolnshire, and Captain Anthony Ludovici, the Nietzschean who had been a contributor to Yeats-Brown's *Everyman* and to the *English Review.* At the 1937 camp Kins and Groups from over twelve counties were represented. There was a particularly strong East Anglian membership.

In September 1938 Lymington became heavily involved in producing propaganda against Czechoslovakia, and against war over the Central European situation. He formed the British Council Against European Commitments, together with John Beckett and William Joyce of the National Socialist League. Lymington was President, Joyce Vice-President, Beckett Hon. Secretary, and Laurence Swan, one of the 'Keepers of the Array', was Treasurer. In a pamphlet entitled *Should Britain Fight? The British Position and Some Facts on the Sudeten Problem*, Lymington pointed out that 'war between ourselves and Germany, with a final victory for ourselves, can only mean Bolshevism in both countries, and the loss of everything for which both countries stand, apart from political creeds.'[50] Lymington's activities at this time were so prominent that the Cabinet, on 13 September, actually asked Sir John Simon to 'restrain him from calling public meetings against going to war for Czechoslovakia'.[51]

After the Munich crisis was over, Lymington drew the lessons from it in the October number of the Array's *Gazette.* 'Few stopped to think', he wrote, 'that such a war would benefit no one but the Jews and the international communists … The fault did not lie with those whose standards were so warped that they believed alliance with the Czechs and Bolsheviks against a regenerate Germany was right, but with us who have so far failed to carry regenerate values through the country.'[52] An anonymous article in the same number claimed that the British people had been misled.

> Ostensibly, we were to fight to save a small nation from German aggression. In our ignorance we did not or could not realise that we were to use force to prevent Germans using force to finish, once and for all, a miserable people using force to oppress and hold within their boundaries better people than themselves. Never once did we enquire, who are these Czechs? If we had, we would have realised that we proposed to sacrifice the best for the worst in Europe. The Czechs are in fact the inferiority-complex whites of Europe. Their fellow Slavs, the Serbians, have called them the white Jews of Europe … They have been a centre for communist intrigue and promise after promise made by Benes, a prominent member of the Grand Orient, has been broken. It is symbolical that Prague is a moneylenders' centre … It was the perfect way to overthrow everything decent in Europe and leave a few master moneylenders, orientals, clever degenerates, and a mass of subhuman beings in control of Europe.[53]

Closely connected with the Lymington group at the time of the Czech crisis had been Captain George Lane-Fox Pitt-Rivers, grandson of the great General Pitt-Rivers, and an eccentric of considerable scope. A landowner in the West Country, and Owner-Director of the Pitt-Rivers museum, he was a Life Member of the Eugenics Society, and General Secretary of the International Union for the Scientific Investigation of Population. As early as 1920 he had produced a book on *The World Significance of the Russian Revolution*, and he was an ardent anti-

Bolshevik. He shared some of Lymington's concerns; in his *Who's Who* entry he described himself as having 'established the methodology of the science of ethnogenics, interaction of race, population and culture'. In 1935 he stood for the North Dorset constituency as an 'Independent Agriculturalist'.

Pitt-Rivers was convinced that international Jewry lay at the base of all recent political events. The Spanish Civil War, which he had personally visited, was a prime example of this. Now, in 1938, he visited Central Europe, and on his return was asked by Lymington to address, on 16 September, 'a packed and enthusiastic meeting in the Caxton Hall', chaired by Michael Beaumont, MP. Pitt-Rivers's contribution appears to have been fairly startling; afterwards Beaumont was so alarmed that he 'rushed into print in the issue of 7 October of the *Jewish Chronicle* … to say that he was no party to any racial dispute and opposed to any form of "anti-Semitism".'[54] In *The Czech Conspiracy: A Phase in the World-War Plot*, and *Czechoslovakia, the Naked Truth about the World-War Plot*, Pitt-Rivers made his views known in print. He believed that Britain, with France, had been asked to fight 'a war of racial revenge … as the ally of Bolshevik Russia'. From the beginning, he wrote, 'the Czechs have been used as the tools and the decoy of the Comintern'. He particularly stressed the strength of the Jews in Czechoslovakia.[55] *The Czech Conspiracy* was similar in its views to the articles published by Mrs Nesta Webster in *The Patriot* in October and November 1938, entitled 'Germany and England'.[56] When Mrs Webster's articles were reprinted as a book, they and the *Czech Conspiracy* were bracketed, by enthusiasts, as 'excellent books',[57] which were 'an education and an eye-opener'.[58]

In December 1938, Lymington and Beckett (who had by now left the *National Socialist League*) began collaboration on a new venture, the monthly magazine *The New Pioneer.* Principal contributors were A. K. Chesterton (the former editor of *Action*, who had resigned from the BUF in March), Anthony Ludovici, F. Britten Austin, Rolf Gardiner, Major-General J. F. C. Fuller, Ben Greene, JP, and Beckett and Lymington themselves. There were also articles by Elizabeth Fairholme (who wrote here, as she had for the *English Review*, on the role of women in the new Germany),[59] H. T. Mills (of the People's Campaign against War and Usury),[60] John Scanlon and Henry Gibbs (both formerly of the BUF), *etc.*

As with so many journals of this type, the start was comparatively moderate. The December editorial was naturally pro-Chamberlain. Its treatment of the November Pogrom was not, however, anti-Semitic. It was against the German actions, but played the matter down, complaining that the reports had been 'highly coloured and distressing'. In its view, 'Crowds of ordinary human beings, especially ordinary kindly Germans, do not seize every opportunity to beat and torture, and to believe some British Press accounts is to lose one's faith in mankind … Without considerably more knowledge of the affair than we can possibly have at the moment, it is surely not for us to "judge" or "condemn".' Two articles by A. K. Chesterton stressed that 'a high moral tone in foreign policy butters no parsnips at home', and contrasted the appalling economic condition of Great Britain with that of the dictatorships, making a plea for totalitarianism over here. Instead of this, 'men of the war-psychosis such as Churchill would launch [the country] into catastrophe on behalf of a system that creates and aggravates its own chronic state of collapse'.[61] The only hint of real anti-Semitism (and that fairly mild) was to be found in an anonymous poem to Anthony Eden, which ascribed to him the view that 'Anschluss simply is not playing cricket/Or not the Rothschild variant of that game.'[62]

In January 1939 the same moderation was observed, with Chesterton, while attacking the 'money-juggling racket' which made the British 'slaves to Money-Power', stressing that though most financiers were Jewish, that was a misfortune, because it confused people. 'It does not matter to what race the conspirators belong. Be they Jew or Gentile it is an abominable wickedness that a

war should be so much as contemplated on behalf of the most shameful nest of parasites ever to spread desolation and misery over the face of the kindly, bountiful earth.'[63] The same care in expression continued until about April.

In April, the invasion of Prague was seen by Lymington as stupid and in such bad faith. Anglo-German friendship now had to be built up with worn-out tools. 'The virtues of the German people, and much of the internal regeneration of Germany since 1933, are so fine that Anglo-German understanding is essential to the future of European civilisation.'[64] John Beckett, attacking G. E. R. Gedye, whose book *Fallen Bastions* had just appeared, declared that 'everyone is out of step but Mr Gedye; as country after country revolts against Jewish domination so our author discovers increasingly lovable qualities in this unhappy race'. A. K. Chesterton followed suit in the next month, with an article entitled 'The War of the Jews' Revenge', in which he described nations as having risen in revolt against the 'chains of usury', in a 'liberation of the national soul against an alien stranglehold and intrusion which challenges the way of life of the people of the West'. The Jews held up the denial of their liberty 'as a wrong for which an ocean of non-Jewish blood ought in justice to be spilt', the British working-man had lived in squalor thanks to such forces, 'and if he dies, his slums will remain as a memorial to his valour, recording for posterity his great sacrifice in the War of the Jews' Revenge'.[65] Lymington reflected this with the observation that 'whoever won the battles in a European war, it would be a victory only for the Jews and Bolsheviks'.[66] Rolf Gardiner, commenting on the Baltic States, recorded that 'Riga has the unpleasant air of a cosmopolitan city in which the Jews are the real exploiters of German decline and Lettish incompetence', and that 'with the withdrawal of German influence and population it is the Jews who have steadily gained predominance in both Latvia and Lithuania'. The Baltic was 'the natural field of German responsibility', and it would be 'suicidal to oppose Germany in fulfilling it', because 'what is at stake is civilisation and the preservation of the earth from the roving sand-dunes of the east'.[67]

And so the *New Pioneer* continued, with, in June, Beckett producing a violently enthusiastic review of *Mein Kampf*,[68] and an anonymous attack appearing on Hollywood, the 'Jewish-American city', which was allowing the cinema screen to be 'used by the Jewish clique who control the industry as a means of propaganda', and who were now attacking Nazism, 'the régime which has put six million idle people to work and reclaimed two million acres of land for productive agriculture'.[69] In July another anonymous and violently anti-Semitic article reviewed M. G. Murchin's *Britain's Jewish Problem*.[70]

Typical articles in the months July–September were those by Joan Morgan, which put forward a plea for Anglo-German friendship,[71] and which bathed, in a manner worthy of Ludovici, in a welter of Nietzschean emotionalism. Nietzsche, Wagner and Hitler all had the idea of the Superman. At even small Nazi Party meetings 'a force [enters] the building, the air crackles with it. The force of Will. These German Wills. The Will of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche and Adolf Hitler, the Will of eighty million people. The Will that has sent Reformations and philosophies and great music pounding down the ages!' What was the aim, she mused, of 'this Warrior Concept of war to the death on evil and lunacy, this relentless crushing of the corrupt and the rotten and the inferior?' It was the 'first steps towards the Superman', as men were bred 'with the same care as civilised peoples bring to the breeding of horses and dogs'. It was 'the dream not of a better world, but of better men to make and people such a world'.[72] Lymington's comment on this was that, despite their decadence, the British could 'still show the Germans that we are decent human beings worthy of respect and capable of understanding something of the philosophy they have developed, which is so brilliantly sketched by Miss Morgan … in this issue'.[73]

In all this, Ludovici struck a slightly different note. He deplored the 'continued inrush of

Jewish refugees into this country', but declared that such views had nothing in common with 'the vulgar anti-Semite'. As far as an Englishman such as himself was concerned, 'To jockey him into the crowd of these unsavoury anti-Semites, and to brand him, as many are now attempting to do, not only as the most despicable Jew-baiter, but also, if you please, as a Nazi propagandist (why not a Nazi spy and have done with it?), is only calculated to … force him into the crowd of rabid anti-Semites with which hitherto he has been loath to identify himself.' Anti-Semitism was, said Ludovici, basically despicable and disreputable as a political weapon, and must be distinguished from the natural attitude of 'my country and my people first!'[74]

The *New Pioneer,* faced by mounting criticisms of being pro-Nazi, declared that it was 'not pro-Nazi, pro-Italian or pro-French', but 'pro-British', standing for 'the protection and maintenance of the best of the British types, English, Scots, Welsh and Irish'. It accepted that Germany had made a great blunder by marching into Bohemia in March. But it was against all the war propaganda, particularly because 'war with Germany would mean the end of white civilisation as we know it'. However justified the Jews might feel in trying to destroy Nazi Germany, that was no reason to regard war as inevitable in order to revenge the Jews. There were bad aspects to the new Germany, but there was a great deal of good, and Britain would do well to follow her example, particularly in the field of national regeneration. Particularly, one must not lose 'the sense of common blood, common interests and ancient traditions'.[75]

In mid-1939 a new political party was formed called the British People's Party. Though advertisements appeared for it in the *New Pioneer,* and its aims were quite clearly in sympathy with that journal, editorial statements tried to make it clear that there was no actual connexion between the two, though the NP was 'friendly to all movements which have the national regeneration of this country as their object'. However, John Beckett left the *New Pioneer* to become Hon. Secretary to the BPP, whose leading light was Lord Tavistock. This, and other movements formed in 1939, will be discussed in a later chapter.[76]

The 'Link' Letter to The Times, *12 October 1938*

On 12 October 1938 a letter was published in *The Times* relating to the international situation. Its text was fairly innocuous, being a restatement of the appeasement policy in a way that would have been acceptable to many in this period. It ran as follows:

> We, the undersigned, who believe that real friendship and co-operation between Great Britain and Germany are essential to the establishment of enduring peace not only in Western Europe but throughout the whole world, strongly deprecate the attempt which is being made to sabotage an Anglo-German rapprochement by distorting the facts of the Czechoslovak settlement. We believe that the Munich Agreement was nothing more than the rectification of one of the most flagrant injustices of the Peace Treaties. It took nothing from Czechoslovakia to which that country could rightly lay claim and gave nothing to Germany which could have been rightfully withheld. We see in the policy so courageously pursued by the Prime Minister the end of a long period of lost opportunities and the promise of a new era compared to which the tragic years that have gone since the War will seem like a bad dream.[77]

The letter was signed by twenty-six people. It is more because of the provenance of the letter than because of its content that it has achieved notoriety; on the very same day a far less moderate letter was published in the same column, which has since been forgotten.[78] But the letter we have quoted was addressed from The Link, Link House, 230 Strand, W.C.2.

Because of this, and the fact that some prominent members of the Link were among the signatories, this has become known as 'the Link Letter'. Yet this is misleading. A 'Link Letter' had

been sent to *The Times* on 2 September, signed by five members of the Link Council (Sempill, Carroll, Domvile, Beazley and Dyer). The present letter, however, was signed by a majority of people who were not members of the Link. It was obviously a letter for which signatures had been collected by Domvile; what is interesting about the list is where the net had been cast, and what it had produced. The list contains members of a number of the extremist groups we have been studying: it also contains a number of more moderate names.

Firstly, the Link: Raymond Beazley, C. E. Carroll, Barry Domvile, A. E. R. Dyer, Lord Redesdale and A. P. Laurie, all of the Council, were the members who signed.

Other groups: Captain Ramsay and Admiral Wilmot Nicholson of the Right Club, Captain George Pitt-Rivers of the Council Against European Commitments, Mrs Nesta Webster of *The Patriot.*

Known pro-Germanists of various kinds: Lord Londonderry, Lord Mount Temple, William Harbutt Dawson, Lord Arnold, John Smedley Crooke MP.

This leaves a motley group, ranging from Douglas Jerrold to Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, of whom it can only be presumed that they were happy to sign a 'pro-appeasement' letter, but not necessarily that they were in any way 'enthusiasts'. Some were naval men of right-wing views (presumably contacts of Domvile's): Captain Bernard Acworth, Admiral Vincent Molteno, Admiral Sir Edward Inglefield; others were military men: Captain Arthur Rogers and Major-General Arthur Solly-Flood; Sir John Latta was a leading shipping man on the Baltic Exchange, Lord Fairfax of Cameron a prominent landowner, Lord Hardinge of Penshurst a retired diplomat.[79]

The variety of signatories to the letter gives little scope for generalisation. The letter itself was innocuous. The attention given to it appears to have been mistaken.

1 *Anglo-German Review,* May 1938.
2 Letter to the author from Mrs Erika Jackson, 16 March 1974.
3 18 Jan. 1939.
4 28 Feb. 1939.
5 7 March 1939.
6 7 April 1938.
7 12 October 1938, reported in *Anglo-German Review,* Oct. 1938.
8 Reported in *Anglo-German Review,* March 1939.
9 See p. 175.
10 Report in *Anglo-German Review,* June 1939.
11 Letter from Lord Paget to the author, 17 Sept. 1976.
12 For much of this information I am indebted to Mr George Attewell, former Labour Agent for Northampton.
13 Letter from Lord Paget to the author, 17 Sept. 1976.
14 *Anglo-German Review,* April 1938.
15 See pp. 90–93·
16 Eric H. Whittleton, letter to *The Patriot,* 15 Aug. 1939.
17 See *British Fascism,* June 1931.
18 'The Austrian Plebiscite', by Margaret Bothamley, *The Patriot,* 21 April 1938.
19 Rebecca West, *The Meaning of Treason,* London, 1949, p. 99.
20 *Anglo-German Review,* August 1939.
21 New Year message, *Anglo-German Review,* Jan. 1938.
22 *Anglo-German Review,* June 1938.
23 Domvile, letter to Sir Samuel Hoare, 21 March 1939.
24 *Anglo-German Review,* April 1939.
25 *Anglo-German Review,* April 1939.
26 Domvile, *From Admiral to Cabin Boy, passim.*
27 'Alas, the Press …' by Admiral Sir Barry Domvile, *Anglo-German Review,* September 1938.
28 *Anglo-German Review,* Nov. 1938.
29 The Earl of Portsmouth, *Knot of Roots,* London, 1965, p. 77.
30 Portsmouth, op. cit., pp. 127–8.
31 Ibid., p. 128.
32 William Sanderson, *Statecraft,* London, 1927, pp. 9–58.

33 *An Introduction to the English Mistery*, n.d.
34 Portsmouth, op. cit., p. 128.
35 Conservative MP for Aylesbury, 1929–38.
36 Conservative MP for Petersfield, 1935–41, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, 1939–40, Governor of Burma, 1941–6.
37 Portsmouth, op. cit., p. 131.
38 Ibid., p. 126.
39 Ibid., pp. 119–125.
40 *Saturday Review*, 24 March 1934.
41 Lymington, manifesto to his electors, quoted in *Saturday Review*, 24 March 1934.
42 Lymington, *Famine in England*, London, 1938, p. 49.
43 Ibid., p. 43.
44 Ibid., p. 84.
45 Ibid., p. 203.
46 Ibid., pp. 21–2.
47 *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, April 1938.
48 *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, July 1938.
49 *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, Oct. 1938.
50 Lymington, *Should Britain Fight*?, issued by the British Council Against European Commitments.
51 Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler*, p. 497.
52 Lymington, 'Lessons from September, 1938', *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, Oct. 1938.
53 *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, Oct. 1938.
54 George Lane-Fox Pitt-Rivers, *The Czech Conspiracy: A Phase in the World-War Plot*, London, 1938, pp. 8–9.
55 Ibid.
56 *The Patriot*, 13, 20, 27 Oct., 10, 17, 24 Nov. 1938.
57 C. Duvivier, letter to *Anglo-German Review*, June 1939.
58 C. Duvivier, letter to *Anglo-German Review*, Jan. 1939.
59 See Elizabeth Fairholme, 'The Women of the New Germany', *English Review*, July 1937, and 'In a German Women's Labour Camp', *New Pioneer*, Dec. 1938.
60 H. T. Mills, 'War and Usury', *New Pioneer*, June 1939, and 'Man Cannot Live by Debt Alone', *New Pioneer*, April, 1939.
61 'Britain Under the Weather', and 'What National Unity could Mean', by A. K. Chesterton, *New Pioneer*, Dec. 1938.
62 *New Pioneer*, Dec. 1938.
63 A. K. Chesterton, 'Financial Imperialism and War', *New Pioneer*, Jan. 1939.
64 Lord Lymington, 'Notes of the Month', *New Pioneer*, April 1939.
65 A. K. Chesterton, 'The War of the Jews' Revenge', *New Pioneer*, May 1939.
66 Lymington, 'Notes of the Month', *New Pioneer*, May 1939.
67 Rolf Gardiner, 'Germany and the Baltic States', May 1939.
68 'The Century's Best Seller', *New Pioneer*, June 1939.
69 'Hollywood Declares War', *New Pioneer*, June 1939.
70 'The Jews', by Watchman, *New Pioneer*, July 1939.
71 See e.g., Joan Morgan, 'For What? An Epitaph', *New Pioneer*, July 1939.
72 Joan Morgan, 'Thus Spake Hitler', *New Pioneer*, Sept. 1939.
73 Lymington, 'Notes of the Month', *New Pioneer*, Sept. 1939.
74 Anthony Ludovici, 'Self Righteousness and the Refugee Problem'.
75 'On *The New Pioneer* and our Attitude to Germany', *New Pioneer*, July 1939.
76 See Chapter 12.
77 Letter to *The Times*, 12 Oct. 1938.
78 P. Gardner-Smith, letter to *The Times*, 12 Oct. 1938 (see p. 305).
79 I have been unable to trace details about two of the signatories, F. C. Jarvis and Bernard Wilson.

[11]

November 1938–The Kristallnacht Pogrom

The Preceding Months

THERE IS no doubt that, in the year 1938, there was a growing awareness of the fact that the German internal régime retained most of the characteristics that had been ascribed to it in 1933–4, and that, indeed, those characteristics were becoming more accentuated. The '1936 pause', which had extended well into 1937, was superseded by overt persecution of minorities, and some of the more terrible aspects of the concentration camp system began to come to the attention of the British public.

As far as the Church question was concerned, Pastor Niemöller's further imprisonment, without trial, in early March brought a great deal of adverse comment in the British press. Much of this was from predictable sources, however. Alongside Church leaders, Lord Cecil appealed for help for Niemöller.[1] An unusual contribution was a spirited, ironical letter to *The Times* from John Sparrow on the legal aspects of the problem, damning the German legal system by the hyperbolic praise he heaped upon its worse aspects.[2] Opposed to the general view, again predictably, was Dr A. J. Macdonald, who was convinced that there were 'two sides to the question', and, after praising what was going on in Germany, criticised 'the forthright, uncompromising spirit in the attitude of several members of the Confessional Church Party' though, in passing, he had words of praise for Niemöller, who had 'the martyr spirit', and 'honestly believes that he is engaged in a cause as vital as that upheld by Martin Luther'. If only he could make 'a fair attempt to estimate the difficulties of others', he might 'achieve

a great deal to heal the wounds in the German Evangelical Church'.[3]

The Church question, however, still did not attract widespread attention in Great Britain. The concentration camps did, though it was only at particular moments like the death of Dr Hans Litten that disquiet was publicly expressed. Such events could cause even Lord Allen of Hurtwood to declare that Germany must put her house in order if she was to retain any good will abroad. In a letter to *The Times* on 9 March, Allen, together with the Archbishop of York, Lord Sankey, and Wyndham Deedes, drew attention to the fate of thousands in concentration camps, and declared: 'Nothing would more assuredly stir good will than a gesture of clemency in Germany; nothing will more certainly close the door to all hope of genuine friendship than to let this present sense of despair become deepened. That we should continue to work for understanding with Germany and yet keep silent on this matter seems to us no longer tolerable.'[4]

Allen himself, by now, held strangely mixed opinions on the German question: he was 'putting completely on one side [his] pacifist opinions, and … assuming that force must be put behind law in a world which remains armed'. However, Britain did not at this stage have the necessary overwhelming force, and so one had to choose between two evils, 'the evil of a catastrophe in trying to uphold law … and the evil of allowing temporary casualties in morality'. In these circumstances, he was 'willing to take the risks with morality during the transitional period in the

hope – perhaps a vain one – that events will play into our hands'.[5]

It was the Jewish question, however, that began once more to gain the greatest prominence in this year. The year started fairly quietly, and when, in its leader, 'Five Years in Germany', *The Times* gave a short picture of Germany on the anniversary of the Nazi rise to power (a short second leader of two paragraphs, showing the comparative lack of concern about German affairs before the Austrian crisis started in mid-February), the tone was balanced, moderate and objective, with the Jewish question being merely one of the items on the debit side of the account:

> To-day – even if full account is taken of the suppression of other political parties and the trade unions, the deplorable conflict with the Churches, and outlawry of the Jews – it is clear enough that Herr Hitler's unchallenged position does not rest on mere force. Millions of Germans regard him with burning devotion as the saviour of his country … He has restored Germany to her place as a Great Power in the world – with possible consequences for good or evil which rest for the moment almost entirely in his own hands.[6]

For many people, in this period, Nazi anti-Semitism had merely seemed an extension of the general anti-Jewish attitudes of Central and Eastern Europe. Lansbury, in the House of Commons, had drawn attention to the plight of the Jews in Poland; in early 1938 the installation of a new government in Roumania, which came out with an avowed anti-Semitic policy, led to further discussion of the problem in general terms in the British press. Two articles, by Norman Bentwich and Israel Cohen, both entitled 'The Jewish Plight in Europe', which appeared in Sir Arnold Wilson's *Nineteenth Century and After* in March, are typical in their approach. Though the concern was general, Roumania appeared the most urgent problem. It is significant, however, that Bentwich saw the aggravation of the problem as stemming from Germany:

> The infection of Nazi Germany was sedulously carried by agents and propaganda to the neighbouring and remoter countries, and has seized on sections of the population suffering themselves from economic distress. The anti-Semitic parties have now come to power in Rumania; they have been growing in strength in Poland; they threaten and perpetrate violence everywhere … The Government's proclaimed policy in Poland and Rumania is a mass emigration of the Jews. It is a parrot cry.[7]

In Germany, though there had been sporadic violence, the main action against Jews had, until now, been primarily economic and social. The Jews had been squeezed out of all public and professional activities, and were very rapidly being forced out of all economic activities as well. It was more and more difficult for them to earn a living, and the pressure for emigration was great. Nevertheless, these measures were, by their nature, far less obvious and worthy of publicity than open violence would be, or indeed was in other countries. It took the invasion of Austria to make people in Britain begin to realise the full brutality of Nazi anti-Semitism.

The reports that began to appear, immediately after the *Anschluss*, of violent and degrading treatment meted out to the Jews of Vienna by Austrian Nazis, were an eye-opener to many. G. E. R. Gedye, the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent in Vienna, published full details of the atrocities, until his removal from Austria by the authorities; other British newspapers followed suit, particularly the *News Chronicle.*

Of course, it was mainly Austrian Nazis who were responsible, but a lot of the supervision of the terror was carried out by German stormtroopers. Some British observers got things wrong, and presumed that there was some distinction between Germans and Austrians in the matter; this belief was strengthened by the fact that German army officers showed a certain amount of contempt for

the activities of the anti-Semites, and that the army occasionally intervened to prevent the worst outrages. Victor Cazalet is typical of this viewpoint. In a letter to *The Times* on 6 May he expressed his abhorrence of the fate of the Austrian Jews, and his concern about their future. He gathered that the German Army had been exemplary in helping Jews against the violence of the Austrian Nazis; nevertheless the plight of the Jews called for action from Great Britain.[8] Gedye was more aware of the real issues at stake. It was not Germans versus Austrians, but the Army, within its limits, versus the Nazis. 'The invading German troops', he wrote, 'took little part in the Jew-baiting and plundering which were a speciality of the Nazis, German and Austrian. Sometimes I saw them looking on with amusement, but usually they paid no attention to it.' He ascribed any signs of distaste that he saw to 'the dislike of the officer caste of the Reichswehr for their Nazi masters'.[9]

Though many people were appalled by what they read, they were uncertain as to the reality behind the stories, and the extent to which Germany was really involved in the excesses. There were, of course, exceptions. The *Anglo-German Review* made little in the way of comment, and indeed the March number contained an article by Philip Douglas entitled 'Alfred Rosenberg, Revolutionary and Philosopher', which gave a very idealistic picture of Rosenberg, and in passing produced the usual comments about the attitudes, and the power, of German Jewry before the Nazi accession to power.[10] Anti-Semitic overtones continued in various articles in that journal throughout the year.

The 'June days' in Berlin showed British observers that a change was coming over German anti-Semitic policy. Until now, it had been possible to see German activities as less violent than those of some other European nations. As *The Times'* correspondent put it, 'some measure of decency'[11] had been observed. Now the gloves were coming off.

It was hard, nevertheless, for many people to believe that such extreme attitudes could be held by any civilised nation. Either the Press must be misleading people, or else the whole thing was caused by 'extremists' who were in need of discipline from the top. Lord Astor saw anti-German attitudes in America as being 'largely due to the intensive and widespread anti-German propaganda being conducted by Jews and Communists'. The American newspapers, in his view, were 'influenced by those firms which advertise so largely in the press and are frequently under Jewish control'.[12] This was the theme which continued to be stressed about the British press by some of those in favour of agreement with Germany, and it was believed by many. Others just believed the press had itself been misled, or was exaggerating. When Chips Channon, commenting on reactions to Chamberlain's flight to Berchtesgaden, said that 'of course some Jews and many of the more shady pressmen who hang about Geneva are furious', because there was 'no war' and 'no revenge on Germany', he spoke for those who believed that, however just Jewish hatred of Germany was, the cause of peace was being endangered by a desire for revenge on their part. At the time of the Munich crisis, such talk was fairly common in London circles. Lord Castlerosse, in the St James's Club, predicted 'a great wave of anti-Semitism in England, because the Jews are trying to push us into war'.[13]

On the eve of the Kristallnacht Pogrom, in the *Bristol Evening Post* of 7 November, C. T. Culverwell, MP, produced an article on Germany which must have looked out of place a couple of days later. After a paean of praise for Hitler, he set out to explain the Jewish problem:

> Side by side with adoration of Hitler is universal hatred of the Jews. When things go wrong the Englishman blames the Government, and the German blames the Jews, whom he thinks the root of all evil and a menace with which, sooner or later, England will be compelled to deal.
>
> However greatly we deplore the harsh methods adopted to deal with this problem, we must

admit that the problem exists. The Jews occupied a position in Germany incommensurate with their numbers.

By their control of the Press, cinema and theatre, their growing monopoly of the medical and legal professions, and their success in finance and commerce, they exercised an undue – and Germans believe a baneful – influence on the social and industrial life of the nation.

A large influx after the war of the least desirable type of Jew from Poland and elsewhere swelled the ranks of the Communists.

When I suggested to Herr Streicher that perhaps the Jews had attained their position by their superior intelligence, he attributed it to their clannishness, and jokingly remarked that we ought to welcome the chance of receiving so much talent.

Culverwell noted that 'there are some aspects of the Nazi régime which we dislike and deplore, but there are others which are commendable'. His article made it clear that the latter outshone the former.[14]

Culverwell, Castlerosse, Channon, Astor – they can all be taken as men with natural tendencies towards the kinds of view they expressed, and not necessarily as examples of general public opinions. There is strong evidence, however, that whole sections of the public continued to disregard the Jewish question, seeing it as of little importance in relation to other matters. Culverwell's own city of Bristol is a good example. The *Bristol Evening World* praised Culverwell for going to Germany to see things for himself, and declared: 'Would that many more of our MPs would do the same – especially some of our self-styled internationalists, who have never stepped a foot inside Germany and judge it with purblind eyes and ears.'[15] On 8 November, the *Bristol Evening Post* published an emotional and enthusiastic article by a local woman, Hilda M. Hawkes, called 'To-morrow Night in Germany', describing the way in which the victims of the 1923 Munich putsch would be remembered.[16]

The murder in Paris, on the very day of Culverwell's article, of the German diplomat Ernst vom Rath by a young Polish Jew was to bring about events which were to shatter, for many people, this complacency. In the same paper as Hilda Hawkes's article, the first reports of Nazi attacks on Jews were appearing.[17]

The Pogrom

The events of mid-November have been often enough described, and there is no need, here, to go into every detail of the orgy of violence that followed on the death of vom Rath. Some chronological details will, however, be useful.

The deportation of Polish Jews back to their country of origin, which had started in late October, was at first seen by the British press more as the occasion for an international situation between Poland and Germany, than as having wider import. Some papers, *The Times* in particular, drew attention to the dire plight of many of the Jews concerned, to the brutal treatment they received, and to the despoiling of them before their departure. Only rare observers, however, were aware of the probability of some fresh attack upon Jews in Germany, for which the occasion was being awaited. *The Times'* correspondent in Berlin was among them, and within a day of vom Rath's death he was writing: 'The 400,000 Jews who still remain in the Third Reich await tonight in fear and anxiety another attack upon their race, which, if the tone of the officially controlled Press can be taken as an indication, will exceed in violence and thoroughness any Jewish "purge" that has taken place during the past five years.' They were awaiting the signal for the fresh attack, 'which has been expected for some time'.[18]

Soon the rioting broke out, accompanied, on an official level, by new and drastic decrees in relation to the Jews. Many of the men were carried off to concentration camps. Families were driven from their homes. Gentiles were forbidden to give them shelter, or even to sell them the essentials of life. Even the most foresighted of observers could not have expected anything on this scale. By 15 November *The Times'* correspondent was reporting from Munich that 'the condition of most Jews here is one of misery, terror and despair'.[19]

The reaction of the foreign press was violent. Lionel Kochan, in his book *Pogrom 10 November 1938*, states that 'for the rest of that week, there can have been few journals of any importance at all that did not speak of the pogrom in Germany and Austria in terms of the utmost revulsion and horror … With one accord, almost, the bulk of the press of every non-fascist country was loud in its expression of shock.'[20]

The reactions among private individuals were equally violent. Chips Channon noted that 'the Pogroms in Germany and the persecutions there have roused much indignation everywhere'.[21] His own view was as follows: 'No one ever accused me of being anti-German, but really I can no longer cope with the present régime which seems to have lost all sense and reason. Are they mad? The Jewish persecutions carried to such a fiendish degree are short-sighted, cruel and unnecessary.'[22] Among prominent pro-Germanists who suited action to words was Lord Mount Temple, who resigned his chairmanship of the Anglo-German Fellowship.

The immediate shock was, however, in many cases short-lived. As Peter Harlow was to note, early next year, 'Indignation towards German methods has cooled off considerably. People have got used to the idea that Jews in Germany are subject to the most ruthless persecution.'[23]

The cooling off had become visible even within November. The many protests recorded in *The Times* in the first week or so tailed off, and one was left, as so often, with *The Times'* correspondence column trivialising the issue (as it had with the 'cocking the snook' episode in 1936) by conducting an extensive debate, over several weeks, on the way in which Jews had been treated in medieval Germany. Other *Times* correspondents hesitated. George Miller of Godalming, as early as 16 November, while stating that 'the whole civilised world stands aghast and horrified at the latest exhibition of barbarism on the part of some sections of the German people', nevertheless felt that 'those who know the German people as many of us do will pause before a wholesale condemnation of that country', and that the blame must lie with certain extreme sections of the party hierarchy. 'I cannot believe', he wrote, 'that so great a leader as Hitler, who has achieved the amazing success of the complete resurrection of Germany, can have given his sanction to this deplorable action, especially at this critical moment in the international situation. Would to God it had not happened!'[24]

By mid-December, many people were recovering from their emotional reaction. C. H. C. Haslam, writing to *The Times* on 14 December, spoke for such people when he wrote: 'Surely … our best course is to lay less emphasis upon the differences which divide nations … I do not suggest for one moment that we should in any way condone anything which violates our consciences or that any news should be suppressed, but I do suggest that less emphasis should be laid upon the shortcomings of other nations.'[25]

What of the enthusiasts? Some, like Mount Temple, renounced their enthusiasm. He resigned the chairmanship of the Anglo-German Fellowship as 'a protest against the treatment of the Jews by the German Government'.[26] Mount Temple's first wife, the mother of Lady Mountbatten, had been Jewish, and it is surprising that it took till the pogrom of 1938 for him to realise the nature of Nazi anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, once he had realised it, he acted. But it is strange that only 20 out of the 900 members of the Anglo-German Fellowship resigned in sympathy.[27] Kochan writes that 'nobody could defend the pogrom – not even the most convinced anti-Semite or apologist for

Germany's policy towards the Jews'.[28] The silence of the Anglo-German Fellowship might seem to corroborate this. The German Ambassador, reporting to Berlin, stated that pro-German circles 'had undergone a severe shock', and that 'their confidence in the possibility of an Anglo-German understanding is shaken; their effectiveness is crippled'.[29]

Nevertheless, Kochan is wrong in his statement that 'nobody could defend the Pogrom'. Britain had people who could. The *Anglo-German Review* was their medium, when even *The Patriot* was keeping quiet on the subject. In an article entitled 'This Furious Concern' C. E. Carroll described a British mob attacking Unity Mitford in Hyde Park for wearing a Nazi badge, and asked why 'the British newspapers which expressed nausea at the thought of an Austrian Jew being forced to sweep a pavement in Vienna' were so 'singularly unmoved by Miss Mitford's plight'. He asked: 'Must one be a German Jew to receive sympathy to-day?' Describing German righteous indignation at vom Rath's assassination, he referred to regrettable hooliganism, which had been swiftly suppressed. Of the far more terrible governmental decrees, he had the following to say:

> In addition, the German Government has announced certain punitive measures calculated to protect its representatives abroad from further Jewish attacks. Admittedly these measures are drastic. Some say too drastic, for they obviously do not fall on the guilty alone. But they compare well with similar measures enforced by other countries in similar circumstances.

Continuing with a comparison with British actions in Egypt and India, he declared: 'The outcry against Germany seems therefore forced and unreal. By whom is it forced? The answer to that question is clear.' Of course, it was the Jews, who had control of the press.[30]

In the same number of the *Anglo-German Review* a comment from the *Birmingham Daily Mail*, made by a certain T. E. C. Harnett, was reproduced, in which he described the Germany of the twenties, in which 'the hidden hand of Moscow was at work; Communists and Jews were their agents'; and A. T. Munnings, RA, declared in a letter that 'it seems that endless insidious propaganda goes on against everything that Germany sets out to do'.[31]

The next month, praise was given to Carroll in certain letters to the *Review*, from members of the Link like C. Duvivier and A. C. Streatfeild. The latter declared that 'Whilst one sympathises whole-heartedly with the hardships that individual Jews have suffered, one is forced to the conclusion that their worst enemies are the leaders of the Jewish race in countries outside Germany. The distorted view the Press and some politicians take is the greatest danger to good understanding between Germany and ourselves, and I am therefore very pleased to see that the *Anglo-German Review* takes a strong line on this point.'[32]

It is fair to say that, in December, the *Anglo-German Review* was showered with violent letters from its readers protesting at the Nazi treatment of the Jews.

The Link had an uneasy time. Individual speakers might refer to the fact that 'if under Nazi rule one Jew received what appeared to be harsh treatment, the columns of the British Press were filled with atrocity stories';[33] Maddocks might 'whilst deploring anything in the nature of a persecution of the Jews in Germany', nevertheless warn members 'against exaggerated reports about what was happening in that country' and express the opinion 'that a concerted effort was being made to sabotage the Hitler–Chamberlain Agreement';[34] the fact remained that the Link Council, at the centre, was very aware of public opinion, and came out with a very statesmanlike announcement, which deplored 'the recent embitterment of the Jewish question in Germany', and declared that the Council realised 'with grief the violent revulsion of feeling caused in this country by these recent developments in the Reich'. They were 'well aware that, for the moment, it has become most difficult to complete that work of reconciliation which is the Purpose of so many', but were

'convinced … that the delay is only temporary', and urged all their branches 'to redouble their efforts in pursuit of our great object'. They assured all Link members of their conviction that 'a kindlier spirit' would prevail in Germany, and declared that, at any rate, the Jews would not obtain better treatment through the 'outlawry' of Germany.[35] That the Link Council's policy of a low profile was a canny one is shown by the fact that, despite the pogrom, Link membership went up by almost a thousand between September 1938 and January 1939. One branch, Birmingham, went up by thirty-eight per cent in the same period.

We have already seen the similar moderation which affected the *New Pioneer* at its outset in December, and which was to be belied in later months.

It is hard to assess the effect of the pogrom on British public opinion. Even at the time, while it was affecting a great majority of the nation, there were a number who, like the Link leadership, merely kept quiet. Was there a silent minority, despite Kochan's belief in universal shock? An opinion poll taken shortly after the event points to this. 'Do you think', it asked, 'that the persecution of the Jews in Germany is an obstacle to good understanding between Britain and Germany?' Seventy-three per cent answered yes. Fifteen per cent answered no. Twelve per cent had no opinion.[36] It is the fifteen per cent that is interesting. It appears to match the fifteen per cent for whom Germany was the favourite nation in June 1937, though of course this may be deceptive.

At any rate, it is not so much the state of public opinion at the time that matters. What is particularly striking, as we have seen, is the speed with which the first impressions appear to have faded. It was of little importance in the general trends of the relationship between the British press and Germany.[37] The same became true of public opinion in general.

It was not the German treatment of Jews, but Germany's perfidy in foreign policy, which was finally to detach most pro-Germanists (apart from the real extremists) from the cause of friendship with Germany.

1 Lord Cecil, letter to *The Times*, 9 March 1938.
2 John Sparrow, letter to *The Times*, 7 March 1938.
3 Dr A. J. Macdonald, 'Church and State in Germany', *Nineteenth Century and After*, March 1938.
4 Letter to *The Times*, 9 March 1938.
5 Lord Allen of Hurtwood to Arnold Toynbee (unpublished letter in Allen papers), quoted in Gilbert, *Britain and Germany between the Wars*, London, 1964, p. 110.
6 Second leader, *The Times*, 31 Jan. 1938.
7 Norman Bentwich, 'The Jewish Plight in Europe', *Nineteenth Century and After*, March 1938.
8 Victor Cazalet, MP, letter to *The Times*, 6 May 1938.
9 G. E. R. Gedye, *Fallen Bastions*, London, 1939, pp. 310–11.
10 Philip Douglas, 'Alfred Rosenberg, Revolutionary and Philosopher', *Anglo-German Review*, March 1938.
11 *The Times*, 18 June 1938, quoted in Gannon, op. cit., p. 226.
12 Lord Astor, letter to Tom Jones, March 1938 (*Diary with Letters*, p. 390).
13 Bruce Lockhart, *Diary*, entry for 20 Sept. 1938.
14 C. T. Culverwell, 'My Impressions after Motor Tour of Germany, Austria and Sudetenland', *Bristol Evening Post*, 7 Nov. 1938.
15 *Bristol Evening World*, 8 Nov. 1938.
16 *Bristol Evening Post*, 8 Nov. 1938, Hilda M. Hawkes, 'To-morrow Night in Germany'.
17 'Nazis Attack Jews', headline in *Bristol Evening Post*, 8 Nov. 1938.
18 'German Press and the Jews', Berlin, 8 Nov., published in *The Times*, 9 Nov. 1938.
19 *The Times*, 15 Nov. 1938.
20 Lionel Kochan, *Pogrom 10 November 1938*, London, 1957, p. 125.
21 *Chips*, entry for 15 Nov. 1938.
22 *Chips*, entry for 21 Nov. 1938.
23 Peter Harlow, *The Shortest Way with the Jews*, London, 1939, p. 239.
24 George T. Miller, letter to *The Times*, 16 Nov. 1938.
25 C. H. C. Haslam, letter to *The Times*, 14 Dec. 1938.

26 *Evening Standard*, 19 Nov. 1938.
27 See Haxey, op. cit., p. 198.
28 Kochan, op. cit., pp. 126–7.
29 Dirksen dispatch, 17 Nov. 1938, quoted in Kochan, op. cit., p. 143.
30 C. E. Carroll, ‘This Furious Concern’, *Anglo-German Review*, Nov. 1938.
31 *Anglo-German Review*, Nov. 1938.
32 A. C. Streatfeild, letter to *Anglo-German Review*, Dec. 1938.
33 Said at meeting of the Wandsworth branch of the Link, 10 Nov. 1938.
34 Maddocks, speaking to Twickenham branch of the Link, Nov. 1938.
35 *Anglo-German Review*, Nov. 1938.
36 British Institute for Public Opinion, Nov. 1938 (Cantril and Strunk, p. 382).
37 Gannon’s short treatment of the event (2½ pages out of a 300-page book on *The British Press and Germany*) mirrors the same impression.

[12]

1939 – The Extremists Isolated

THE EVENTS of March 1939 were to detach all but the most extreme enthusiasts from Germany. Most ‘appeasers’ began to realise that their policy had been mistaken; those people who had a positive admiration for the German régime began to revise their views. In one sense, therefore, this final period provides us with far less in the way of material than the years that had gone before; and much of that material lies amid the more extreme movements, and individuals, rather than in the more central areas of public opinion.

The Initial Calm

The months between November 1938 and March 1939 were uneventful, as far as foreign affairs were concerned. Gannon describes, however, the sense of ‘suspicion and foreboding’ that existed in the British press, exacerbated by unfounded rumours of German intentions of aggression in the West.[1] Hitler’s 30 January speech, on the other hand, led to what Churchill described as ‘ripples of optimism’ in some quarters.[2] The British public appears to have been in a state of confusion as to what the future held – though it is true to say that a growing number of people were fully aware of the unpredictability and basic hostility of Germany.

There were, of course, strong exceptions to this. Enthusiasts remained, and were prepared to state their case strongly. Charles Domville-Fife, for example, produced a book during these months entitled *This is Germany*, which contained a foreword by Lord Queenborough. The latter saw the book as a plea for understanding. Spurred on, no doubt, by British reactions to the *Kristallnacht*, he admitted that ‘to all of us certain aspects of National Socialist policy have been distasteful and incomprehensible’, in the same way that Russian policies were. On the other hand, ‘it has been wisely said that, upon examination, few things prove wholly bad, and in view of the vital and urgent need for a better understanding between ourselves and Germany this work, which reveals so much that is sound and constructive and worthy of praise, should serve as a timely and excellent antidote to the overnumerous publications designed solely to vilify and distort and denigrate the policy and achievements of the remarkable man who, after fifteen years of bitter struggle, became the leader of eighty millions of Germans’. Queenborough went on to praise the new Germany, in which ‘class hatred and artificial distinctions’ had been eliminated, and in which all were ‘devoted to the service of their race and country’.[3]

Domville-Fife’s book itself contained similar praise, and was at great pains to play down the Jewish question. There was some justification for German dislike of the Jews in their midst,[4] but he noted that the Jewish shops he saw in Germany were ‘quite unmolested’, and ‘the fact that they had been compelled to paint on their windows the word “Juden” did not seem to prevent them doing a certain amount of trade with the good-natured crowds that filled the main streets’.[5] He noted that the murder of vom Rath had exacerbated things a little, but stressed that there was ‘less antagonism to the Jews in Germany than in Austria’, and that Only once during all [his] travels in the Reich’ was he ‘witness of any action against the Jews’.[6]

Other writers were similarly keen to re-establish relations with Germany. The old plea about the misunderstanding of Germany, due to our press and radio, continued to be put forward. H. W. Blood-Ryan, for example, blamed the bad translations of German speeches on the BBC. He had 'the feeling that, aggressive as are the German leaders in the field of foreign affairs, relations are being worsened … by some sinister source in England'.[7]

The events of November 1938 had soon waned from people's minds. To some, the reports had been exaggerated. For others, there had been some justification for the German actions. As Cowling puts it, 'Hitler often seemed mad, odd or idealistic. But he expressed sentiments which some shared and had expressed forcibly in the early twenties'.[8] The Jewish immigration problem in Great Britain further complicated the issue. Many felt, as Beaverbrook did, that there were 'already far too many Jews in London'.[9] Volumes of an antiSemitic nature continued to appear in 1939, from such publishers as the Boswell Printing and Publishing Co., the Britons, and Hurst and Blackett, a subsidiary of Hutchinsons, which had from 1933 onwards produced works about Hitler and Germany, and which in March 1939 produced the first unexpurgated English version of *Mein Kampf* (translated by James Murphy), and M. G. Murchin's *Britain's Jewish Problem* (based on the question of Jewish immigration).

Francis Yeats-Brown's rather muddled antiSemitism was largely based on anti-Zionism. It was to be strongly expressed, later in the year, in an article for the *New Pioneer* entitled 'Listen, Tommy!',[10] and in the chapter of his book *European Jungle* entitled 'The Children of Israel'. Combined with strong views on the Palestine question, in Yeats-Brown's mind, were equally strong views on Jewish immigration into England. 'I would not allow any more Jews to enter England, but I would like every Jew born in this country to be proud of his British citizenship', he declared, and proposed a dual passport scheme whereby Jews would have to choose between a Jewish and a Zionist passport. 'The Jews have great possibilities when standing on their own feet. We do not want them standing on ours.'[11]

Yeats-Brown was unlike many British antiSemites, however, in his abhorrence of Germany's treatment of the Jews. 'It is horrible', he wrote, 'and haunts my conscience whenever I praise the other achievements of the National Socialists, some of which are great and good … The way the Germans have treated their Jews is disgusting.'[12]

It has been worth raising the name of Yeats-Brown at this point, for he is typical of those who, up to March 1939, had been enthusiastic about many aspects of Germany's internal régime, even while expressing anger at that one aspect of it which related to the Jews. A series of articles by him in the *Observer* in 1938 had expressed his admiration for the revival which Hitler had brought about in Germany. Obsessed as he was by the ideal of physical fitness, Yeats-Brown saw in the Nazi movement a healthy and vigorous antidote to the former state of Germany. Added to this, it had created a more prosperous society in which the evils of unemployment and misery had been stamped out.[13] Much of British dislike for Nazi Germany, in Yeats-Brown's view, had been fostered by a lying BBC. An example of this was the BBC's failure to mention the delirious Austrian enthusiasm at the *Anschluss.*

'Up to March 1939', writes Sir Evelyn Wrench, 'he believed in Hitler's good faith.'[14] In this Yeats-Brown was typical of most of the enthusiasts who remained.

The invasion of Czechoslovakia and its effect on the enthusiasts

'His fault is writ large across a startled Europe', wrote Yeats-Brown of Hitler, after March. 'None of his neighbours trust him. The law of the jungle prevails. With the breaking of his pledge at Munich our recent hopes of disarmament and reconciliation lie shattered beyond the possibility of

quick repair.'[15] Up to this point, Yeats-Brown was nevertheless convinced, he had been right to support Germany's actions. 'In my view, from 1919 up to September 1938, through twenty years of crises, each more hectic than the last, Germany had reason on her side. She was justified in slithering out of reparations, whose total was never fixed; she was wise to elect Adolf Hitler, who gave her back her self-respect; she was entitled to reoccupy the Rhineland, which was German soil; and to take Austria, which had repeatedly voted for reunion; and to rescue the Sudeten Germans. Her methods were rash and her words bitter; but I was prepared to justify the indignation of a great people against the Treaty of Versailles. That is the past. Germany had many cards in her hands, but she has overplayed them, as so often before in her history, and has lost the ace of hearts, which is the confidence of Europe.'[16]

Yeats-Brown was typical of many who saw their belief in Hitler's good faith, and in the prospects for peace with Germany, shattered by the invasion of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. 'Treachery and perfidy', wrote Sir Arnold Wilson, 'are crimes against society which live not merely in history books, but in men's minds when all other forms of wrong-doing are forgotten … Sulla, "half lion, half fox, the Don Juan of politics", is the classical prototype of the Fuehrer of modern Germany unless, indeed, we invoke the memory of Caesar Borgia, whose baleful star flamed across the sky for little more than four years and then disappeared into shameful oblivion.'[17]

Even George Ward Price reacted strongly to the German action. Only a year before, he had been taking a strongly German line with Czech ministers, claiming that 'he was Hitler's friend and could tell the President what Hitler's intentions were'. He had informed them that Hitler would 'demand autonomy for Deutsche Boehmen, withdrawal of Czech troops from frontier, Slovakia to Hungary, Bohemia and Moravia remain independent but in orbit of German influence'. In his view, at that time, the Czechs must acquiesce. 'Small nation must think small … Czechs go down in history as race saved Europe from war … Only hope. If fought, annihilated. Foolish, madness suppose anyone help them. England not able fight a war – decadent. Germany invincible.'[18]

Munich had seemed fine to Ward Price. Hitler's incorporation of Deutsches Boehmen into the Reich was not all that far from his prediction. But, like so many others, Price believed Hitler's aggressive aims to be mainly concerned with German minorities. The annexation of Bohemia in March 1939 showed him that all he had written about Hitler's limited aims, concern with German minorities, and respect for the 'integrity of the small States in her orbit' had gone up in smoke through this act of aggression. In a new book, *Year of Reckoning*, he declared that 'the possibility of cordial relations has now passed away' and that 'it remains only to consider the factors and forces of the opposing alignment which has taken its place'.[19] Now that he no longer saw Germany as a friend, his views of her internal policies changed too. In the 'ruthless suppression of internal political antagonists, and of the German Jewish minority', the Nazis had 'done much evil'. And now 'the heavy-handed methods employed within Germany' were being 'extended to international policy' and would lead to war.[20] At least Price now had the opportunity to say that his pleas for rearmament had been justified.

In a revised edition of his book *Across the Frontiers*, which had first appeared in 1938, Philip Gibbs added some pages dealing with the new situation. He, too, now believed that Hitler had 'gone beyond the limit of any excuse which could be put up on his behalf by those who, for the sake of avoiding a war which would be the ruin of European civilisation, hoped and half believed that, according to his own words many times repeated, Hitler would restrict himself to the rebuilding of his own Germanic Reich'.[21]

Across the Frontiers had been a balanced and moderate book, by a man who hoped for peace, and, as far as Germany's internal policies were concerned, was prepared to hope for an eventual

moderation of the worst excesses. This new edition not merely rejected Hitler's foreign policy actions; it also, now that the chips were down, strongly criticised the treatment of the Jews in Germany, and declared that the November pogrom had 'spoilt all the hopes of those who had been working for better relations between Germany and England for the sake of European peace'.[22] A novel by Gibbs which appeared in the summer of 1939 repeated the same views.[23]

There were still, of course, enthusiasts who welcomed even this latest aggression of Germany. There is little doubt, however, that from now onwards pro-German activity was mainly confined to the BUF and to small groups of enthusiasts on the lines of the Link and the British People's Party. Most of the public were convinced that war was coming, and even former enthusiasts like Price and Yeats-Brown were prepared for it. General opinion had swung strongly against Germany. As *The Times* put it, the reaction against Germany's theories and methods was 'entirely spontaneous and shows itself everywhere after so crude a manifestation of them as the subjugation of Czechoslovakia'.[24] Parliament reflected public feeling on this matter. 'The feeling in the lobbies', wrote Harold Nicolson on the 17th, 'is that Chamberlain will either have to go or completely reverse his policy … All the tadpoles are beginning to swim into the other camp.'[25] Chamberlain's Birmingham speech, on the same day, did indeed reverse his policy, and brought the end of appeasement.[26]

'Czechoslovakia has ceased to exist', wrote 'Chips' Channon. 'No balder, bolder departure from the written bond has ever been committed in history. The manner of it surpassed comprehension … The country is stirred to its depths, and rage against Germany is rising.'[27] This swing is clearly reflected by an opinion poll conducted in June, which once again asked the question, 'Which foreign country do you prefer?' This time only three per cent put Germany as their first choice, as opposed to the fifteen per cent on previous occasions. And to another question 'Which is the foreign country you like least?', fifty-four per cent put Germany, eleven Japan and nine Italy. Many of Britain's Russophobes must have found their hatred of Germany now overriding their hatred of Bolshevism: only five per cent put Russia as the country they liked least.

The general reaction was particularly clearly shown by the British Legion's abandonment, in March, of its policy in relation to Germany.[28] Typical of the ex-service approach had been the writer and cartoonist Bruce Bairnsfather, who in 1936 had produced much praise of Nazi Germany. Now, in 1939, his description of Hitler was more nuanced. Hitler was 'a terrible nuisance' who, though he was 'sincere to himself', had an 'unnecessarily exaggerated patriotic ambition', and was 'a fanatic from birth'.[29]

It is significant that it was a foreign policy issue that united most of the British people at last. Germany's internal policies, even at the extreme moment of the Kristallnacht Pogrom, could never have had such an effect. It was danger to the peace of the world, clearly shown by the inability to trust Hitler's word, that hit people where it hurt.

Areas of continued enthusiasm

In the period between the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the outbreak of war, various new movements surfaced, mostly concerning themselves with opposition to war, and some of them being strongly antiSemitic in nature. Central figures, in this area, were Lord Tavistock and Captain Archibald Ramsay.

Hastings Russell, Lord Tavistock, the future Duke of Bedford, had been a considerable enthusiast for Social Credit, who had for years actively pursued the cause of monetary and parliamentary reform. He was a pillar of the Economic Reform Club.

He had already gone on record, in 1938, with pro-German statements. In a series of letters to

the *New English Weekly* he had declared that, despite his interest in Social Credit, he had been tempted to put that journal into his waste-paper basket because of its anti-German attitudes. 'Hitler', he wrote, 'is supported with enthusiasm by large sections of the population because he gave German youth faith and hope in the future, restored their self-respect, and did much to reduce unemployment.' Hitler was, of course, ambitious, as the *Anschluss* had shown, 'but there is little evidence that he would engage in an aggressive war with neighbours of non-German origin who did not treat him unfairly and none at all that he would have the German nation behind him if he attempted a venture of such a kind'.[30] The obsession with rearmament was preventing monetary reform, and the pursuance of a fair and generous foreign policy. What was needed was practical friendship towards Germany.[31]

In the summer of 1939, according to his memoirs, he was 'invited to join a small group of people who were dissatisfied with all existing political organisations'.[32] This group became the British People's Party, with Tavistock as President, John Beckett as General Secretary, Ben Greene as Treasurer, and John Scanlon as a member of the executive.[33]

The first thing to notice is the extent to which this executive had stemmed originally from the Left. Beckett had been an ILP Member of Parliament for a mining constituency, Scanlon had been a leading ILP journalist, and was a former miner and shipyard worker,[34] and both of them had been radical members of the BUF. Ben Greene, too, had been a member of the Labour Party. All were united in a wish to reform British society (though in Tavistock's case this was closely connected with the theme of Social Credit). The question of Germany and war appeared only to impinge on this because they felt that it was a deflection from the pursuit of more important ends. Nevertheless opposition to the possibility of war played by far the largest part in their programme.

The movement's avowed aims included 'the right to security and social justice', 'the abolition of a financial system based upon usury which perpetuates social and economic injustice', 'the abolition of all forms of land speculation', 'the security of labour in its industrial organisation', and 'the abolition of all class differences'. Wedged among these aims was that of 'safeguarding the employment and integrity of the British people against alien influence and infiltration'.[35] The similarity to the French radical Right is interesting, and the name of the party makes one wonder whether any reference to Doriot's Parti Populaire Français was intended.

Another aim, however, was 'the abolition of all military alliances and political and economic commitments which may involve this country in wars which in no way affect the security and national independence of our peoples'.[36] In pursuit of this particular aim a further movement was formed, under Beckett's aegis, entitled the People's Campaign Against War and Usury. When H. St John Philby (the Arabian explorer, and father of Kim Philby) stood at the Hythe by-election as a BPP candidate in 1939, he fought it 'on the sole issue of war and peace'.[37] He was strongly supported by Lady Domvile, the wife of Sir Barry.[38]

Philby's experience in relation to the BPP shows the extent to which, despite its avowed aims on the social front, the movement was overwhelmingly concerned with opposition to war. 'I was beginning to realise', he wrote, 'that the Labour Party was becoming more war-minded than the Tories, but I kept up such pressure as I could in favour of peace in a series of letters to the *Manchester Guardian* and other organs of the Press, which had not closed their doors to discussion of the subject. As a result I was approached by Lord Tavistock, John Becket [*sic*] and Ben Greene of a new and small organisation called the British People's Party, *with whose general outlook I had no sympathy* though I fully and cordially agreed with the anti-war attitude. *Eventually I agreed to fight the Hythe by-election.*'[39]

The Right Club was another anti-war movement, whose leading light was Captain Ramsay, MP.

Captain Archibald Ramsay came of a long line of Scottish military men. After education at

Eton and Sandhurst, he took a gallant part in the First World War, where he was severely wounded, and eventually invalided out of the army. In 1931 he became Conservative MP for Peebles.

Until 1937, his parliamentary career had been fairly uneventful. At that point, he appears to have become suddenly aware of the Communist menace. The Spanish Civil War seemed to him to be the centre of Communist activities. On the occasion of the bombing of the *Deutschland*, for example, he described the event as having been 'organised by international Communist agencies with the object of embroiling as many countries as possible in a European war', and asked the Foreign Secretary to 'add his protest … to that which the German Government is making'.[40] He was much exercised about the activities of Soviet Russia,[41] and also about subversive Communist propaganda,[42] as well as Communist activity in the streets of London.[43]

One of Ramsay's concerns was the maintenance of a Christian society against the attacks of the 'godless'. The United Christian Front, of which he was chairman, combined pro-Franco sentiments with the defence of Christianity in Spain and elsewhere. When it became clear, in late 1937, that a League of the 'Militant Godless' was planning a conference in London, Ramsay set about opposing the venture, and ended up, in June 1938, by proposing an Aliens Restriction (Blasphemy) Bill, which was passed by 165 votes to 134.[44]

It was in 1938 that Ramsay, as he himself has explained, first became aware that Bolshevism was Jewish. Soon, in a manner worthy of Mrs Nesta Webster, he found the secret hand of Jewry behind most historical upheavals, including Oliver Cromwell, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution and the Spanish Revolution.[45] These views led him to sympathy with Germany. In the chaos after the First World War, he believed, Germany was the only country in which a political leader and group had arisen 'who grasped to the full the significance of these happenings, and perceived behind the mobs of native hooligans the organisation and driving power of World Jewry'.[46] His bibles became *Mein Kampf and* the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion.*

In 1938 Ramsay had joined the Coordinating Committee, a gathering together of a number of right-wing groups which aimed 'to present a united front against Communism'.[47] Two at least of the movements concerned were also antiSemitic – the National Citizens' Union and the Militant Christian Patriots. The Committee ceased to exist in early 1939, and in May Ramsay founded a new society, the Right Club.[48]

'The main object of the Right Club', Ramsay wrote, was 'to oppose and expose the activities of Organised Jewry, in the light of the evidence which came into my possession in 1938 … Our hope was to avert war, which we considered to be mainly the work of Jewish intrigue centred in New York.'[49] The membership was kept secret, because of the Jewish menace.[50] In these circumstances, it is difficult to assess the nature of the membership, though some names are known. Admiral Wilmot Nicholson and his wife Christabel were members, as were Mrs Frances Eckersley, Anna Wolkoff (the daughter of an admiral in the Imperial Russian Navy),[51] and – William Joyce.[52] The Duke of Wellington presided at several of the meetings. There was a membership of about 350.[53]

In 1938 and 1939 there were many other small antiSemitic associations in Great Britain. The National Socialist League still continued, with Joyce and Macnab. It had a small offshoot called the Carlyle Club. There were the National Citizens' Union, and the Militant Christian Patriots. Leese's Imperial Fascist League was still in existence. A group called the Nordic League contained, as members, Captain Ramsay, and Brigadier-General R. B. D. Blakeney of the Imperial Fascist League (and formerly of the British Fascists). There was also the rather mysterious organisation mentioned (without a name) by Dirksen, the German Ambassador, in a dispatch sent on 19 July 1939; its president was described as Lady Alexandra Hardinge,[54] and among its activities was the showing of a film in which Jewish ritual slaughter was depicted.[55]

Most of these groups, as well as being antiSemitic, were by now at least anti-war, and often pro-Nazi. The BUF, too, continued with its pro-German views, and believed the manhood of Britain was being pushed into war by the powers of international finance. 'Germany … has offended this world power by summary dealing with the Jewish masters of usury', Mosley had written in 1938. 'So every force of the money power throughout the world has been mobilised to crush them, and that power does not stop short of payment for its vendetta in British blood.'[56] His 1939 statements continued in the same vein. He was convinced that Britain should dissociate herself from Eastern Europe, encourage disarmament in the West, return Germany's colonies to her, and concern herself above all with her own Empire, As far as Europe was concerned, peace and union were of prime importance, with Britain and Germany taking the main part in uniting the continent in face of the might of America and Russia.[57] In the Earls Court Rally on 16 July, Mosley stressed the patriotism of his movement, which would 'fight for Britain', if any country 'attacks Britain or threatens to attack Britain', but which would say to the Parties: 'A million Britons shall never die in your Jews' quarrel.'[58]

It is interesting to note that Yeats-Brown, who still hankered for peace with the Germany he admired, but who had become aware, in March, of the need to stand up against aggression,[59] attended this Earls Court Rally, parts of the message of which accorded with his view that 'we must not be involved in a war to make the world safe for Stalin or international Jewry'. His views on it were mixed. While he 'agreed with ¾' of what Mosley said, 'the other quarter is a stumbling block … I listened in vain for any word that would have shown that if a crisis came suddenly he would be behind the Government'.[60]

The hard core of the group around the *Anglo-German Review* appeared unaffected by the March crisis. Indeed, it positively welcomed this latest aggression of Germany's. Typical was a poem by D. Eardley-Wilmot, entitled 'The New Reich', which idolised the 'iron will' that had brought about the conquest.

> We had no wealth but these two hands
> We had great need and iron bands
> And now our oak-tree shades three lands.
>
> What is there we could not fulfil?
> Now there is grist in ev'ry mill,
> And added to it … iron will.[61]

In May Professor A. P. Laurie produced in Berlin a new book, with an introduction by Domvile, entitled *The Case for Germany.* In Domvile's words, Laurie wrote 'of the National Socialist movement with knowledge and great sympathy'. This was all the more valuable because Laurie was a foreigner, 'who cannot be accused of patriotic excess in his interpretation of the great work done by Herr Hitler and his associates'.[62] Laurie's book was a constant panegyric of the Nazi régime. The Jewish question was, in his view, 'grossly exaggerated',[63] and he excused it with a number of the typical arguments generally used in this context.[64] As for Czechoslovakia, it had been under 'the complete control of the Soviet', and Hitler had been compelled to march in 'to close the open door into Europe for the Soviet armies'.[65] It had been 'impossible any longer to tolerate this promontory penetrating deep into Germany and governed by people who were largely communistic and hostile to Germany'.[66]

As usual, the British press were blamed by such people. At a meeting of the Link in Southend, Hubert Maddocks declared that 'politicians and newspapers had obviously been "swung round" by

some powerful influences between March 16 and 20'.[67] Sir Raymond Beazley roundly declared, at a meeting in Birmingham, 'I see no cause in what has happened for increased tension between Britain and Germany'.[68]

At ground level in the Link, however, some signs of strain were showing. The chairman of the Twickenham branch, Captain Evetts, and the chairman and secretary of the Croydon branch, Alderman Gibson and Miss Jane Roberts, resigned. The Wells branch, while reporting a slight increase in membership, noted that this was 'despite recent events on the Continent'.[69] On the other hand new branches were founded in Doncaster in April and in Northampton in May. What the Link lost on the swings, it appears to have gained on the roundabouts. There was a slight rise in overall membership between March and June, and local meetings appear to have been attended with great enthusiasm. At the end of July a party of 'about a hundred "Link" members, mostly from the Bath branch' went to Salzburg.[70] Sir Samuel Hoare's statement in the House of Commons, which suggested that the Link was an instrument of the German Propaganda Ministry (which was hotly denied by Domvile) led, according to Domvile, to a few members resigning; but a much larger number joined at this time, including the Duke of Westminster.[71]

We have already seen how the *New Pioneer* became increasingly antiSemitic after April 1939.[72] The antiSemitism of the London branches of the Link became much more overt at about the same time. New antiSemitic movements were springing up, such as the Right Club. It was as though the exacerbation of the international situation was producing this effect.

The Patriot, which continued as antiSemitic as ever, had, from 1936, been converted from its uncertainty about Germany to a considerable amount of pro-Germanism. It described the *Anschluss* however as 'a great shock to the friends of Germany in this country – and they were many and increasing'. Hitler had 'sown distrust and ill-will and made it hard for any of the adjacent nations to put their trust in Germany acting in a really neighbourly spirit … The feeling at the moment is that the German appetite for absorbing surrounding states will grow with the digestion of Austria.'[73] Within a week, however, the 'hysteria of the Left' had reconciled *The Patriot* to Germany's action, which now meant that 'the barrier against Bolshevisation has now been linked up across Central Europe, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean'.[74] At the time of Munich, *The Patriot* came out strongly against 'the forces of world-Jewry', which ever since 1933 had been enlisted against German people and German interest'. It naturally supported Chamberlain's action.[75] Mrs Nesta Webster's articles in October and November continued the same theme, and editorials stressed the power of Judaeo-Masonry in Czechoslovakia.[76] 1939 was a year in which *The Patriot* was snowed under with pro-Hitler articles and letters. It took the Nazi–Soviet Pact to undermine the journal's view of Hitler as the bulwark against Communism.

Ambassador Dirksen, reporting back to Germany in July, referred to the fact that in Great Britain antiSemitism had been growing in 1938 and 1939. 'Antisemitic attitudes', he wrote, 'are revealed more clearly by conversations with the man in the street than by press sources. Here, except in Leftish circles, one can speak of a widespread resentment against Jews which, in some instances, has already assumed the form of hate. The view that the Jews want to drive Britain into war with Germany finds widespread belief.' The growth of immigration had promoted this antiSemitism. However, events like the November pogrom had been something of a setback, as it was 'not fully understood, even in antisemitic circles'. Nevertheless, 'a further increase of the anti-Jewish feeling in Britain can be expected'.[77]

Dirksen's views, however, must be taken with a pinch of salt. There is no doubt that immigration, together with continual publicity by the BUF and other bodies, had brought the Jewish question very much before the mind of the man in the street. Most of Dirksen's actual examples, however (apart from a section of the English Catholic Press), related to the specific

bodies we have been studying – the *New Pioneer,* Captain Ramsay, *etc*. The extent to which Dirksen actually came across 'the man in the street' is doubtful. While there is no doubt that extremist antiSemitic bodies multiplied in the last months of peace, their membership does not appear to have been vast, and often overlapped. The BUF is a different matter. Benewick and Cross both see the general decline into which it had fallen as continuing through 1939. Skidelsky, on the other hand, makes a good case for a rise in membership in this year;[78] and his claim is supported by the evidence from, for example, Leeds,[79] and also by the large turn-out for the Earls Court Rally in July. It was the peace campaign which appears, above all, to have effected this recuperation. Many of those who attended Earls Court were probably little affected by Mosley's other political and antiSemitic policies. And Mosley himself seems to have played to this particular audience; admittedly 'the Jews were attacked, but mainly by implication'.[80] The main attacks, however, came on Churchill and Baldwin, and these aroused jeers from the audience. Mosley was now in splendid isolation as the only major public figure standing against war; his movement therefore attracted all the hangers-on who had seen their views more widely shared in public life before March.

Dirksen's comments appear to differ from those of Rosenberg's contacts in 1934, and if they were to be believed they would denote a significant change in British public opinion in the intervening years. An important comment, however, was the one describing the November pogrom as 'something of a setback'. British reaction to Nazi excesses was, in fact, much the same in the late thirties as in 1934, even for parlour antiSemites. The reality of persecution had shown that, for all except the most ingrained extremists, antiSemitism was an attitude rather than a spur to political action, and other political emotions were far more effective and resilient. The whole of Dirksen's report smacks of wishful thinking for the benefit of the Führer. He was perhaps influenced by the contemptuous dismissal, by Hitler and Ribbentrop, of Albrecht Haushofer's more accurate assessment of matters, in 1938. Haushofer had reported that 'the belief in the possibility of an understanding between Britain and Germany is dwindling fast', and that in the event of war 'the British Government would have the whole nation behind it'.[81] The contempt Haushofer received was typical; it was important, for the Nazi leadership, to believe that Britain was divided and unprepared for war. Strangely, reports to the Führer had begun from then on to reflect this view.

The last stages

It is not to be denied that some prominent individuals, apart from members of extremist groups, continued to express admiration for Germany. But they were now isolated phenomena, exceptions to prove the rule. Some exhibited considerable naïveté. George Robey, for example, aged 70, said in a newspaper interview in August:

> Hitler's done a marvellous job for this country, as well as for Germany. He's woken us up. We were getting a bit behindhand … I said that to Winston Churchill the other night. He didn't like it at all. He got very angry. I said 'Heil Hitler' to him, or something funny … Hitler stopped Germany from going Red, didn't he? You can't hold down a great nation like the Germans … The German people are strangled. They're held down. They've not got far ahead yet, but Hitler's done his best. I used to live in Germany as a young boy. That's how I first learned how thorough, how disciplined they are – what a marvellous people. I've always stood up for them since.[82]

Among writers Henry Williamson, of course, continued on his enthusiastic way. He even had, writes Skidelsky, 'the wild idea of flying to Germany to persuade Hitler not to make war. "If I could see him, as a common soldier who had fraternised, on that faraway Christmas day of 1914, with the men of his Linz battalion under Messines Hill, might I not be able to give him the amity he so desired from England, a country he admired…?" But he was already too late.'[83]

Edmund Blunden, in July, produced his most stirring account of the new Germany, in an article in the *Anglo-German Review.* He claimed that the British had become 'unprofitably ready to build up strong and threatening opinions on very slender bases of knowledge. Some European questions are really too complex to be set about in this lusty way.' Referring with approval to an article which Enid Bagnold had published about Germany in the *Sunday Times* of 6 November 1938, he wrote:

> She spoke of the marvellous vitality of the people there under their present Government; she depicted the energies in action, not for some ridiculous and desperate scheme of war, but for the improvement of the country itself in spiritual and material resources. What she had felt … tallied with my own natural feelings during visits to Germany under Hitler. The prevailing sense I had, and it does not fade, was of a great clearness and freshness of life, a pervading revival of national dignity and personal unselfishness; something like the quality that Wordsworth once knew in France and expresses in a famous passage of 'The Prelude'.

It was unlikely, Blunden felt, that the 'spirit of Germany' would have changed since last November. (In this, he obviously ignored both the Kristallnacht Pogrom and the invasion of Prague.) He was sorry that the English public was 'given so little sense' of this spirit, 'apart from the political topics, of which we are given so much'.[84]

Such single-mindedness was, however, rare. Even Rolf Gardiner, who remained equally single-minded, was forced to admit the shift that had occurred in public opinion. 'Since last autumn', he wrote, 'the hopes raised by the Munich meeting have been dissipated, first by the rancorous recriminations of our negatively-minded ruling class, then by German insensitiveness to the effects on foreign opinion of drastic measures against the Jews, then by the increasing influence of refugees in this country, preying upon British humanitarianism, and finally by Herr Hitler's inability to justify his breach of promise over the incorporation of the Czechs in the greater Reich.' For Gardiner this was a 'tragedy', because 'those who should be friends and kinsmen are in open enmity'.[85]

There still remained, of course, a number of proponents of peace at all costs. There were the straightforward pacifists, the members of the Peace Pledge Union; there was the ILP, which was selectively pacifist, retaining its dislike for wars founded on capitalist interests – a view forcibly put in the journal *Forward.* But the 'appeasers', who had not acted from pacifist principle so much as from what appeared to be a practical assessment of the situation, had on the whole benefited by the lesson of March, and were now more or less in favour of a sterner line with Germany. Attempts, at government level, to reopen negotiations in an appeasement vein, such as the Wilson–Hudson–Wohltat negotiations in July,[86] significantly led to a public outcry when they were leaked. As Halifax remarked in conversation with Dirksen, further appeasement negotiation would only be possible after 'a period of calm making for the pacification of public opinion'.[87]

Apart from pacifists like the Peace Pledge Union, and selective pacifists like the ILP, therefore, the only strong peace movement came from the hard core of positive enthusiasts for Germany who remained. These included, in the House of Lords, such people as the Duke of Westminster, who was strongly pro-German and antiSemitic (and a recent member of the Link), Lord Redesdale and Lord Sempill (both of the Link as well), Lord Brocket (Chamberlain's friend and confidant), Lord

Buccleuch (who, with Brocket, had been among Hitler's frequent visitors), and Lord Mottistone. In the Commons, it was more the eccentrics like Captain Ramsay and C. T. Culverwell.[88]

Apart from these extreme enthusiasts, and the extremist political groups we have seen, March–September 1939 was a period in which most enthusiasts tempered their views. Tennant, in conversation with Ribbentrop and members of his *entourage* in July, asked 'how the British could be expected to trust Hitler again after he had broken his word over the Munich agreement'.[89] He also 'told von Ribbentrop that one reason why we now felt bound to oppose Germany's demands was because the vast rearmaments and huge army that had been built up in Germany seemed to suggest that Hitler had a far more important objective in mind than the conquest of the little countries near his frontiers. I told him that there is an important school of thought in England who honestly believe that Hitler wants world domination.'[90] Tennant had flown to Salzburg, having consulted with Sir Horace Wilson before his departure. On his return he sent a memorandum, dated 31 July, to Chamberlain.[91]

Tennant's memorandum warned of German intentions with regard to Poland, and of the German belief, despite Ribbentrop's bitterness at British rejection of German friendship, that Britain would not do anything at all in face of German aggression in that quarter. Alongside these warnings, and Tennant's own obvious mistrust of German intentions, there was also, however, a continuing feeling on his part that something must be done to regain some influence through friendship:

> The united, dynamic, very young German nation is something tremendous which is definitely there, and we should, I feel, make more effort to understand it, work with it and accept it. It is now too late to attempt to dam up this terrific force. The last chance of doing this would have been at the time of the march into the Rhineland.[92] We can now only try to guide them, and this we can only begin to do if we get on to more friendly terms.[93]

Tennant was in the same dilemma as some of the other enthusiasts who had been shocked by March, who now had a mistrust of Hitler's intentions, who believed that war might well be inevitable (and indeed desirable in certain circumstances), but who still hoped for some possibility of peace. Ward Price, Yeats-Brown, Philip Gibbs and Sir Arnold Wilson, who had all reacted strongly in March, developed mixed feelings as the year progressed.

Ward Price, while conceding that the 'most probable development [was] war', and that Germany, 'by pursuing her expansionist aims … will one day place the Governments of Britain and France in the position of having to declare war on her',[94] hoped against hope that 'if, by an effort of statesmanship without precedent in history, the leading Powers of the world can devise some means of conceding peacefully to Germany the great scope which she demands, Europe may be able to settle down to another period of security, in which political ambitions might soon be relegated to the background of the world's attention by a general outburst of long-pent-up commercial and industrial activity'.[95] Yeats-Brown believed that 'war is not only inevitable, it is imminent unless we train ourselves, as well as arm ourselves, so thoroughly that aggressors are deterred'. The whole population, he said, 'must be ready in case of war. If we do so prepare ourselves, then we may delay the conflict beyond living sight and hand over our heritage in a better condition to the next generation.' Not only strength could contribute to keeping the peace, however; concessions ought to be considered too. 'We must be prepared, morally as well as physically. Prepared to resist Germany and Italy if their claims are extravagant, but prepared also, out of our strength, and in friendship with France, to make concessions which should have been made long ago in favour of the Axis Powers. We must not be involved in a war to make the world

safe for Stalin or international Jewry.'[96] Philip Gibbs wished to trust in the German people, and to persuade them 'that we have no quarrel with them as a people, and that if their Leader will listen to reason, and conform to a code of international law, and prove his will to avoid war, we are ready to make a lasting peace'. Hitler was the nigger in the woodpile. Yet 'War even now is not inevitable. Let us not accept a sense of fatalism towards it. While defending our own liberties and those of other nations by all the strength and spirit we have, let us also work passionately for any chance of peace, because, as all of us know in our hearts, the next war if it happens wall be a flaming hell in which all beauty of life will be destroyed, and "victory", whoever wins, will be a hideous thing.'[97]

Sir Arnold Wilson was particularly torn. That admirable man of conscience had, as always, decided to 'hear the other side'. The moment his first anger began to wane, he visited Germany to talk with the German people, and with German officials. Unlike Gibbs, he believed it was impossible 'to try to distinguish between the German people and their leaders', because the people were 'anxious, but confident in the genius of Herr Hitler'.[98] Wilson himself told the Germans that 'we had tried to negotiate again and again in the last two years, but had not found Herr Hitler willing to do likewise. Our patience was almost unlimited, but if war was forced upon us we should display a staying power which would eventually decide the issue.'[99]

Wilson was, however, aware that Britain's army had been destroyed in the inter-war period, and that Britain had 'shirked the duty of full rearmament and national service until a few months ago'. For this reason Britain and France 'should express our willingness to meet German and Italian claims, if and when clearly and comprehensively formulated, to an extent greater than hitherto contemplated'. On the other hand, 'we must ourselves decide what demands we will accept and what we will refuse, and be ready to *go* to war *à outrance* upon our chosen ground. If death is to bring our lives to an end, we must so meet it that we may save our good name, knowing that though for us all, the wise and the foolish, the slave and the free, there is but one end, yet do our works live after us, and by their fruits we shall be judged in the Great Assize of history.'[100]

As the year wore on, however, Wilson was to become more and more keen on a compromise solution. If Germany used force, it would be 'met by the same methods'.[101] On the other hand, the 'Yellow Peril' was the greatest danger to the world. 'No effort, and almost no sacrifice, is too great to reunite what was once called Christendom against it or, at least, to prevent a war which would leave the West helpless against the East.'[102] For this reason he advocated 'comprehensive measures of conciliation', even though they involved 'retreat from some untenable positions and war to the utmost limit if they are rejected'.[103]

The anger even of established enthusiasts about Germany's perfidy in marching into Czechoslovakia was matched by a conviction that Britain must stand out against further actions of this kind. Even Sir Arnold Wilson was aware of the probability of war on this basis. Nevertheless, men like Gibbs, Yeats-Brown, Wilson and Ward Price continued to hope that some peace formula might emerge.

1 Gannon, op. cit., pp. 229–30.
2 Churchill, *Daily Telegraph*, 9 Feb. 1939 (quoted in Gannon, op. cit., p. 232).
3 Lord Queenborough, Foreword to C. Domville-Fife, *This is Germany*, London, 1939.
4 C. Domville-Fife, *This is Germany*, London, 1939, p. 17.
5 Ibid., p. 271.
6 Ibid., p. 264.
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Epilogue

BY THE END of August, it was clear that war was inevitable. Sir Arnold Wilson, 'almost physically sick at this end to my seven years in Parliament striving for some sort of international understanding,' was nevertheless convinced of two things. Firstly, that it was Hitler who was to blame: 'Hitler's perfidy, his rape of Czechoslovakia in March was fatal to his more reasonable suit against Poland. I could blame no one else for the quick change of outlook in this country.' Secondly, that he himself must find a way to serve his country: 'My next thought was how I could best serve. I had done something to make myself physically fit for a more active life. I wrote to my old friend the CIGS offering my services, but he had nothing to suggest.'[1] In the event, Wilson joined the RAF, at the age of 55, and became a rear-gunner. 'The rear-gunner of those 1940 days, in those machines, was lucky, and a good shot, if he made a dozen sorties',[2] writes Gracchus. 'From now on', Wilson had told his constituents in October 1939, 'I am pledged to one thing, and to one thing only, with my own body, with my own muscles, and my own experience, such as it is, to help to bring the war to a successful conclusion. To that I am dedicated.'[3] On 31 May 1940 he was shot down and killed.

It is true to say that most of those who had been in favour of Anglo-German friendship, or had even had admiration for the Nazi régime, in the years 1936–8, now rallied to their country's cause, with those who were of an age to undertake active service doing so, often with conspicuous gallantry. Pro-German attitudes had never implied a lack of patriotism. Indeed, such attitudes had above all been found in the most patriotic areas of public opinion. As we have seen, pro-Germanism had often gone hand in hand with a clamour for rearmament, and a hatred of pacifism. Now that Britain was at war, the issues were clear to most patriots. Indeed, for most former enthusiasts the issues had been clear since March 1939.

It was only the most extreme remaining enthusiasts who continued to attack British policies in relation to Germany. Even *The Patriot* and Mrs Nesta Webster, stunned by the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 23 August, which they saw as a 'base betrayal of the anti-Soviet cause',[4] returned to their old themes of the dangers of Prussian aggression. To many of those people who saw the Bolshevik menace as the greatest danger to Europe, Hitler had ceased to be a bulwark, and had instead joined those who menaced.

If some anti-Semites saw Bolshevism as the greatest danger, however, there were others for whom the war remained entirely a Jewish plot. Mosley, Leese and Ramsay kept up their campaigns in the 1939–40 period, as did Admiral Sir Barry Domvile, Lord Tavistock, and other assorted extremists.

Though the Right Club closed down at the beginning of the war, some of its members were to gain considerable publicity. Joyce, of course, went to Germany. Ramsay, believing his own attitude to be that of patriotism, continued to 'fight the internal enemy, no less formidable than the Axis Powers and in a way more dangerous'; he disseminated leaflets with titles like *Have You Noticed?*, and anti-Semitic verses such as 'Land of Dope and Jewry'. The idea was that of 'educating the public sufficiently to maintain the atmosphere in which the "phoney" war … might be converted into an honourable negotiated peace.'[5] In the House of Commons he stressed his patriotism, and attempted to convince people of the distinction between anti-Semitism and pro-Nazism, fearing that the Home Secretary would be stampeded 'into identifying the two things by a ramp in our

Jew-ridden Press'.[6] This did not, however, prevent him from being arrested under Regulation 18B shortly afterwards. From prison he continued, by letter, to table questions for Ministers.

Ramsay's associate Anna Wolkoff was involved in a plot whereby secret information was obtained from the American Embassy by the agency of a coding officer called Tyler Kent. Much of this information was believed to deal with secret negotiations between Britain and that centre of 'Jewish intrigue', the United States, then a neutral power. Eventually, Tyler Kent and Anna Wolkoff were brought to trial in November 1940 for offences against Defence Regulations, including an attempt by Anna Wolkoff to send a coded letter to William Joyce in Germany.

Like Ramsay, Arnold Leese was appalled to be considered unpatriotic, merely because he was trying to undermine the war effort. The Imperial Fascist League had been concerned to point out, in speeches and pamphlets, that 'we were simply fighting for the Jews'.[7] One of its most prominent publications, a pamphlet entitled *Leese for Peace*, 'quoted Lord Halifax's statements as to why we were at war, criticised them piecemeal',[8] and ended with the statement:

> There is really *only one* war aim! We are fighting the Jews' Chief Enemy for the Jews! Poland and Czechoslovakia are not British Interests but Jewish Interests.[9]

Leese took precautions against arrest, in the form of a series of hide-outs, but was eventually arrested on 9 November 1940.

Mosley and the BUF took a slightly more moderate line. Mosley stressed, in word and in print, that as the country was at war, his members must 'do nothing to injure our country, or to help any other power'.[10] On the other hand, the war was 'a quarrel of Jewish finance',[11] and 'a political war against the political system of a foreign country which our politicians do not like'.[12]

Mosley's loyalty, in the event of an invasion, was not in doubt. As Lord Tavistock later wrote: 'With regard to Sir Oswald Mosley's loyalty, in his paper, in his public speeches, and in private conversations, he has always urged his followers to defend their country in the event of invasion.' In *Action*, in May 1940, Mosley wrote that in such circumstances 'every member of the British Union would be at the disposal of the nation. Every one of us would resist the foreign invader with all that was in us. However rotten the existing Government and however much we detest its policy, we should throw ourselves into the effort of a united nation until the foreigner was driven from our soil. In such a situation no doubt has ever existed concerning the attitude of British Union.'[13]

The BUF's campaign against the war, and against the Jewish forces that had inspired it, nevertheless continued side by side with such statements. There is no denying that there was a certain logic in the situation. There was nevertheless a certain logic, too, in the Government's decision to imprison the leading members of the BUF, under the extended powers given by Defence Regulation 18B (1A), in May 1940, at the critical period when German troops had reached the Channel.

The Government's logic was not related to past opinions, or many more Englishmen would have had to be imprisoned. It was not related to the question of 'treason'; for even stronger evidence of treason could have been levelled at other figures who were not imprisoned, and Lord Birkett himself, the chairman of the Defence Regulation 18B Advisory Committee, ruled out the suggestion that the 18B prisoners were detained because they were traitors. The Government, as Benewick points out, had one simple criterion; they detained these men 'because their views and activities had become prejudicial to the public safety or the defence of the realm. They were preaching anti-war propaganda and anti-Semitism at a time when Great Britain was nearing a crisis, and this could have had a detrimental effect on the morale of the nation.'[14]

After the outbreak of war Lord Tavistock continued to work for peace with Germany, both in

word and deed. He even attempted direct negotiations with Germany, through the German Legation in Dublin, and then handed the German peace conditions to Lord Halifax on 18 January 1940. An extensive correspondence with Halifax ensued, in the course of which Tavistock's views were clearly expressed. In his opinion, Germany's actions in 1938–9 had been perfectly reasonable. He could not understand why Poland had not been pressed to accept 'Herr Hitler's extremely reasonable March proposals'. We should not forget, he added, 'that even in our boyhood the German Jew was a byword for all that was objectionable; that there is good evidence of unfair treatment by Czechs of German minorities and ample evidence of unjust and even brutal treatment of Germans by Poles'. At home, he was convinced that 'a large and growing number of people are not satisfied in regard to the adequacy of the issue on which we went to war this time'. He criticised the vindictiveness of the French, accused the Poles of atrocities, and deplored the generally unsympathetic treatment that had been accorded to Hitler.[15]

These views were not just expressed in private letters. Tavistock took great care to reprint the whole correspondence (including Halifax's replies) in a pamphlet entitled *The Fate of a Peace Effort* (1940). He also produced pro-Nazi statements in *Action*.[16] Later in 1940, he succeeded his father as Duke of Bedford.

Only extremists made public statements against the war, of course; and one gets the impression that the Isle of Man harboured mainly eccentrics and visionaries as a result of 18B. Other strong admirers of Nazi Germany avoided confinement. The extremists were few, but they were resilient. Domvile, Tavistock, Williamson and several others continued to voice that admiration after the war. During the war, such views did not necessarily denote a desire for peace. Yeats-Brown, for example, patriotically wished to help his country,[17] while at the same time continuing to see good in the Nazi experiment. 'Am I an optimist', he wrote to Henry Williamson in 1942, 'to believe that what was good in Nazism will survive, and that the Jews will not rule the world, and that this country will be regenerated?'[18]

Pro-Germanists did, of course, remain figures for suspicion or recrimination. Gardiner, Williamson, Blunden, all had their problems, either with the authorities or with their neighbours. Lord Brocket, as James Lees-Milne put it, having been taken up by Chamberlain as a confidant, 'found himself in an exalted position undeservedly', and then 'was made a scapegoat'. He had a nervous breakdown at the beginning of the war, 'brought about by the aspersions thrown at him from all quarters.'[19]

It is difficult, of course, to gauge the extent to which pro-Nazi opinions continued to exist. Any who held them would (apart from the extremists we have quoted) have been unlikely to have voiced them publicly. The post-war period, moreover, saw the appearance of a series of memoirs attempting to palliate, and in some cases even to deny, pre-war actions and attitudes. These post-war writings have tended, except in certain unusual cases, to be a hindrance rather than a help in the assessment of pre-war attitudes. They also give us a hint as to the artificiality of the post-1940 situation.

This is because, unlike France, we did not suffer invasion. In these circumstances, almost everyone has conformed, since 1940, to the norm created, first by the war situation, and then by the defeat not only of Nazi Germany but also of Fascist Italy. Only certain strong-minded, and often eccentric, individuals have reacted against that norm. It is therefore impossible to assess opinion in relation to Nazi Germany in this period, in the way that we were able to in the thirties.

A glance at the French wartime situation will show us how wrong it would be to attempt generalisations as to what people's reactions in the event of invasion would have been. There, some Fascists became leading Resistants, others became collaborators in Paris, others became supporters of the Vichy government. Attitudes to Germany, before the war, were similarly no

pointer to subsequent action. Some of the most patriotic and anti-German sections of French opinion became prominent in the collaborationist camp, and vice versa.

Since the war, of course, France has been in the same situation as Great Britain, though it is a situation more difficult to maintain. In France, almost everyone has been in the Resistance (a remarkable achievement), and there appear not only to be no collaborators left, but also almost no supporters of Vichy. Those that remain are on the whole people whose record is so well-known that it is almost impossible to deny.

It is important to note, however, that the French situation involves political *actions* which have, in the judgment of history (which means because of the later course of events) been found to have been wrong. In Great Britain it is only in the most extreme cases (e.g. William Joyce) that such actions have been involved. Here, it is a question of opinions. And, as the French situation has shown, such opinions were in no way a means of assessing what actions might be taken. The German intelligence service clearly had the most sketchy views as to people's potentialities. Their archives can mislead the historian as much as they misled the Germans themselves.

For all these reasons, our serious study of pro-German and pro-Nazi opinions and activities in Great Britain has had, of necessity, to stop at 3 September 1939.

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7 Leese, *Out of Step*, p. 67.
8 Ibid., p. 67.
9 *Leese for Peace*, pamphlet, 1940.
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19 James Lees-Milne, 'Eccentric characters in country houses', *The Times*, 30 Aug. 1975.

Conclusion

"THE PAST is a foreign country: they do things differently there', writes L. P. Hartley.[1] This study might seem to have proved that statement true. Some of the attitudes taken up by people in the thirties now appear almost unbelievable. Yet this is not because the past is different from the present; it is rather because the present's view of the past has been coloured by the events that have taken place in between, to the extent that we have ordered past events into a different pattern from the more disorganised picture which they presented at the time. In this sense, the present is more foreign to us than the past.

The world political situation, and the internal political situation of Great Britain, have of course altered considerably in the last forty years; but it is remarkable to note the extent to which basic political attitudes remain unchanged. Throughout this study readers will have been aware of the parallels which they could draw with certain contemporary trends. The general disillusionment with parliamentary government, and with professional politicians, for example; the impression of economic decline, and of the inefficacy of democratic procedures in dealing with it; the conviction, among certain simple-minded and single-minded men (often of military background), that forces must be set up to maintain public order in the event of civil collapse; the search for a scapegoat in certain racial minorities. Then, as now, the mass of the population were certainly affected by the economic discomforts, but far less affected by extremist reactions than the alarmists made out. Then, as now, the workers were more in search of a social wage than of social revolution. Then, as now, successive bourgeois governments muddled along in an inadequate but generally acceptable way.

We are not, of course, faced by a Nazi Germany. There are, however, many countries in the present whose internal régimes would be, in abstract, distasteful to the British public, but for whom many of the same arguments are produced as were paraded in relation to Nazi anti-Semitism. It is a situation peculiar to the country concerned, which only those who were brought up there can understand; it is nothing in comparison with what is going on in other countries; it is no business of ours, being an internal affair of the country concerned; any protest would be counter-productive, and would affect the oppressed far more than the oppressors. As one sees these arguments being produced in the letter-columns of our newspapers in the thirties, one perceives that these are persistent characteristics of one section of the British public, just as continuous protest is a persistent characteristic of another; while those who try to judge each situation on its merits are rare.

What really stirs the British public to action is an external threat to itself. Until that point is reached, two forces are at work, sometimes within the same person at the same time: the desire to see the best in one's neighbours, and the pursuit of material business interests.

When the Nazis first came to power in 1933, interest in the New Germany was fairly limited in this country. There had been a certain amount of sympathy in various quarters, in the preceding years, for the 'raw deal' which Germany had undergone. There had been some impatience with French intransigence, and a fellow-feeling with the companions in arms from the opposite trenches. The new régime did not, to many, seem any good reason for denying this basic sympathy. The disquieting news of some of the extreme measures of Nazi internal policy did, it is true, alienate British public opinion; but these questions never really came to the forefront. The fact is that Nazism did not really seem very important. It certainly appeared to present no threat to world

peace, or to this country. Even the enthusiasts for Fascist régimes, and for dictatorship, do not appear to have placed Nazi Germany half as high in their estimation as the successful Italian experiment. There were isolated enthusiasts for the new Germany. British anti-Semites, for example, found in the new régime something which had been wanting in Italian Fascism. But, apart from extremist groups, real enthusiasm for Nazi Germany appears to have been an individual matter, with the majority in most social groups having no strong feeling one way or another. There were a number of violent supporters of the new régime, and a number of violent opponents, but little in the way of general public knowledge or interest.

The year 1936 proved to be a turning-point. The Rhineland *coup* caught the imagination of a large part of the British public, and French intransigence reinforced the feeling that Hitler had acted as a patriot, a man of action, and a man of peace. Events later in the year caused a recognisable section of British opinion to turn to support for Nazi Germany. As might be expected, it was foreign affairs which caused this trend. The Bolshevist threat appeared to be facing Western Europe, what with the Franco-Soviet Pact, the *Front Populaire* in France, and the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. Germany now appeared to be the bulwark she had always claimed to be. In the same year, the Nazi propaganda machine had consciously been playing up the moderation of German internal policies. Many foreign guests were invited to the Olympic Games and to the Nuremberg Rally, and returned full of enthusiasm for the many real achievements of the Nazi régime. Every effort was being made to gain support in the right quarters, and the British Right fell for the bait hook, line and sinker. Though certain events in 1937 might, to the observant, have shown the writing on the wall, British public opinion, particularly on the right, remained in very much the same state in that year as well; though it is true to say that for some, the evidence of Germany's massive rearmament brought occasion for pause.

It was in 1938 that the German threat became clearer. The headlong rush towards war had begun. As crisis succeeded crisis, it was not only general public opinion that moved over to a realisation of the nature of the threat which Nazi Germany presented. Gradually the 'enthusiasts' too fell by the wayside, as the 'appeasers' took over.

Many 'enthusiasts' retained their convictions, however, till March 1939. It is significant that it took this last proof of Hitler's double-dealing, and the realisation that his ambitions were not confined to German hegemony, but could lead to a world conflagration, to convince these people that he must be opposed. The evidence of Nazi nastiness presented by the November Pogrom had not had this effect on them. From March 1939 onwards the main support for Nazi Germany came from extremist groups, ranging from the BUF to the Link, from the British People's Party to the Right Club. Such groups had always existed, but their opinions on Germany had never, over the past few years, been so isolated.

If there is one fact, in relation to political behaviour, which has emerged from this study, it is that most people take their political stances from ignorance or from carelessness. The ordinary membership of a group such as the Link, for example, appears in many cases to have been unaware of the extremist nature of the movement to which they belonged. Other people's political opinions appear to have been based on reactions to non-existent threats, or on admiration for non-existent virtues. The temptation to line up with others, to 'stand up and be counted', could lead to political stances which, if considered rationally, would have horrified their very holders. As for foreign affairs, régimes were either admired or despised for reasons relating to domestic attitudes or fears, and here again artificial line-ups were created which tended to divide everything into two camps. Any rational examination of an individual situation was *ipso facto* ruled out.

It is easy for us to be superior when looking at the mistakes of the thirties. We can see the whole picture, and we are far from the emotions which created the block reactions. Yet we have no cause to be smug. It is a constant factor in human nature that we consider personalities rather than

events, take one side ‘because of the people on the other side’, discount features that should dismay us in the behaviour of ‘our own side’ if other factors appear of more importance. It takes almost superhuman virtue to view each situation as though it were unrelated to any other, and judge it on its merits alone. This may be stating the obvious, but it cannot be said too often. Let the ‘enthusiasts’ for Nazi Germany be a lesson to us.

1 L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between*, London, 1953, p. 9.

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Between the completion of this book, and its publication, a number of books relating to anti-Semitism and Fascism have appeared. The author does not feel, however, that they necessitate any changes in his argument, nor, indeed, that they cover any new ground relevant to the specific subject of this book.

1 For books published in London, the abbreviation 'L' will be used throughout.

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